

Randy Hillier, MPP

Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington

Via email to Shannon Gutoskie, Community Relations Coordinator, MVCA

Comments regarding Planning and Regulations for the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA), identified as "Staff Report #2891/16", dated December 1, 2016.

The MVCA derives its funding through a mixed funding formula derived from municipal levies and provincial appropriations. Although governance of the MVCA is provided by a municipally appointed board of 15 Directors, its authorities are created and delegated by statutes of the provincial legislature.

As the elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario representing the majority of the municipalities within the MVCA watershed, it is incumbent upon me to express my evaluation of these new policies and their probable effects on my constituents.

In this memorandum, the MVCA is seeking municipal consent to greatly expand its present legal authorities, however the MVCA has not expressed or identified any measurable or quantifiable benefit to the public that this expanded authority would provide. I have a number of significant concerns with any proposal that would impose increasing restrictions for which the benefits are either subjective or assumed. Prior to itemizing my concerns, we must fully understand the region's economic, employment, and social realities, as there is a very broad diversity and range of factors that differ immensely within the watershed from the city of Ottawa through to the municipalities of Lanark and Frontenac Counties, and Addington Highlands.

Although the city of Ottawa may find some social or environmental benefit to these proposals and be viewed as somewhat benign by the smaller urban areas such as Carleton Place and Perth, they will negatively and disproportionately be injurious to the more rural townships within this watershed.

.../2

Constituency Offices:

Perth Office: 1-105 Dufferin St. • Perth ON K7H3A5 • Tel: 613-267-8239 • Fax: 613-267-7398
Carleton Place Office: 224 Bridge Street • Carleton Place, ON K7C 3G9 • Tel: 613-257-8130 • Fax: 613-257-4371

Randy Hillier, MPP

Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington

A recent Fraser Institute regional analysis of Ontario's economic and labour market performance illustrates that rural Ontario has underperformed as compared to our urban and suburban counterparts. While other regions of the province have recovered after the recession of 2008, rural Ontario's economy has remained stagnant as the number of regulations, barriers and restrictions to development in rural areas have increased. The correlation of economic vitality and sustainability to economic development should be self-evident, and has been significantly diminished with often well-meaning, but nevertheless misguided and unnecessarily prohibitive and or costly regulations that prevent sustainable growth and development in our townships.

In addition to the negative impact on economic growth due to excessive and restrictive land use regulations, the cost of electricity, which is substantially more expensive in small town rural Ontario, has also been an aggravating factor in our poor economic development. To illustrate the social cost of our anemic growth, one only needs to look at the recent school closure proposals by the UCDSB and the LDCB. Presently, these two boards are considering the closure of up to 40 elementary and secondary schools in this electoral district alone.

Negative Consequences of this Policy

1. It is abundantly clear that the regulations as proposed and their enforcement would be biased upon ownership. If an imposition on a wetland was required by a municipality, a utility, or the province, there would be a hierarchy of flexibility and cost; however, should the wetland property be privately owned, prohibitions, rigidity and excessive costs and penalties would be imposed. It is wholly contradictory that this policy prevents an individual from developing or improving their lands, dwellings, or businesses in areas adjacent to insignificant wetlands, while at the same time permitting improvements and developments in these same lands if undertaken for the public benefit such as utilities, parks, or for conservation purposes. Economic development and improvements upon private property is arguably more important and necessary as on public lands as it is the mechanism that funds public infrastructure. Furthermore, should an insignificant wetland be in or adjacent to provincial Crown land, this policy does not propose to place any restrictions on these lands.

.../3

Constituency Offices:

Perth Office: 1-105 Dufferin St. • Perth ON K7H3A5 • Tel: 613-267-8239 • Fax: 613-267-7398
Carleton Place Office: 224 Bridge Street • Carleton Place, ON K7C 3G9 • Tel: 613-257-8130 • Fax: 613-257-4371

Randy Hillier, MPP

Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington

2. Unlike provincially significant wetlands, which have been determined using some objective criteria and can be reasonably justified as requiring development restrictions, the new MVCA proposals attempt to impose the same process on all wetlands regardless of their significance to the health of the watershed and instead relevant only to their physical size (0.5 Ha.)
3. Should the MVCA feel that a wetland is in need of protection and preservation, significant or insignificant, it ought to be incumbent upon them to apply to the respective township on a case-by-case basis to have said wetland protected, and should the Township agree, the MVCA must be required to compensate the property owner for any financial loss, as well as loss in use and enjoyment.

Recommendations

1. All property, whether private or publicly owned, be subject to the same development regulations;
2. Develop objective criteria to determine if a wetland requires protection under the municipalities' planning authorities; and
3. Provide compensation to affected property owners.

This continued expansion of regulations and restrictions turns the concept of 'sustainable development' on its ear; it proposes broad developmental restrictions that are unnecessarily over-reaching and antithetical to the very concept of development, sustainable or otherwise. The longer term effect of regulatory restrictions on development in rural Ontario is already being felt. The four school boards represented in my riding of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington are undergoing student accommodation reviews, highlighted by proposals to close as many as 40 community schools over the next four or five years; banks are closing up, health care services are being reduced and Service Ontario outlets in rural communities offer but a fraction of the services that are provided in larger centers. All of these problems are endemic to lack of development and growth and would be exasperated under the proposed policies, if adopted by our townships, would grant the MVCA expansive and invasive new authority. Such policy adoption should not be done precipitously, as it exposes property owners and any new development to the capricious rectitude of an unelected body.

.../4

Constituency Offices:

Perth Office: 1-105 Dufferin St. • Perth ON K7H3A5 • Tel: 613-267-8239 • Fax: 613-267-7398
Carleton Place Office: 224 Bridge Street • Carleton Place, ON K7C 3G9 • Tel: 613-257-8130 • Fax: 613-257-4371



Queen's Park Office:
Room 207 NW, Legislative Bldg.
Toronto, ON M7A1A8
Tel: 416-325-2244
Fax: 416-325-2196
E-mail: info@randyhillier.com

Randy Hillier, MPP
Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington

I would encourage the MVCA to withdraw the existing proposals and undertake a comprehensive review of their operations and mandate to develop a plan that permits and facilitates growth while improving our economic and natural environments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Randy Hillier".

Randy Hillier