



The Ontario Headwaters Institute

Newsletter of September 7, 2015

It's Labour Day, with its many connotations. In addition to its focus on worker rights and safety, it is perceived as an "end" of summer and the start of what is usually about ten intense weeks of conferences and consultations.

This year, we seem to be living that old adage "Be careful what you wish for", with five major consultations, as well as others, on tap. Please find below some basic information about up-coming consultations with implications for watershed management, natural heritage protection, development, and government operations, followed by a few general comments.

Fall Consultations

- Review of the Conservation Authorities Act:** The Province has initiated its review of the Act, with a process very similar to the one involving the Greenbelt: a high-level concept paper has been posted to the Environmental Registry; public discussions are planned; and draft changes will be posted for further consideration at a later date. The paper and contact info can be found on the Environmental Registry (posting # 012-4509). Dates for meetings with environmental organizations include:
 - Friday, September 18th at the Newmarket Community Centre, 200 Doug Duncan Dr., Newmarket, Ontario from 10am to 1pm
 - Wednesday, September 30th at the Columbus Centre, 301 May St. South, Thunder Bay, Ontario from 9am to 12pm
 - Friday, October 2nd at the Steelworkers' Union Hall and Conference Centre, 66 Brady Street, Sudbury, Ontario from 9am to 12pm.
- Wetland Conservation:** Similar to the approach above, the Province has posted a wetland conservation discussion paper on the Environmental Registry (posting # 012-4464). It is a high-level document; "listening sessions" are being held; and a draft set of policies should be posted at a later date for further consultation. Locations and dates of the listening sessions include:
 - Ottawa, September 16th RA Centre, 2451 Riverside Drive, Ottawa 6:30-8:00pm
 - Toronto, September 23rd Black Creek Village, 1000 Murray Ross Parkway, Toronto 6:30-8:00pm
 - Thunder Bay, September 29th Valhalla Inn, 1 Valhalla Inn Road, Thunder Bay 6:30-8:00pm
 - London, October 6th London Public Library, 3200 Wonderland Rd S, London 6:30-8:00pm
 - North Bay, October 8th Discovery North Bay Museum, 100 Ferguson Street, North Bay 6:30-8:00pm
 - Niagara Falls, October 14th Gale Centre 4171 4th Avenue, Niagara Falls 6:30-8:00pm
- Great Lakes Protection Act:** Due to a quirk of legislative gamesmanship, the original window to register to depute at Committee following second reading was open for only 2 hours. Following interventions by the OHI and other organizations, there has apparently been an agreement by the three house leaders to re-open the window to register to depute at Committee. While focused on the Great Lakes, the proposed act has implicit and explicit implications for watershed management in the province. Look for an announcement following the return of the Legislature on September 14;
- Coordinated Land Use Planning Review:** Following the winter and spring public meetings, we await the report of the Panel. Information is somewhat fluid, but the report should be tabled between now and the end of the third quarter, with a second round of consultation to follow; and,

5. **Climate Change:** Submissions on the Province's discussion paper were due March 29, 2015. Since then, Ontario has made commitments to cap and trade, hosted a Climate Summit of the Americas, is working with other jurisdictions for the meetings in Paris, and is referencing climate change in the four items above and in other initiatives. We requested an update on further actions promised in the discussion paper – that “feedback will help inform a strategy and action plan to be announced later this year”. While we did not receive a response in time for this update, we hope more can be shared soon.

General Comments

Clearly, the current set of consultations is extensive. One on hand, we asked for them, and they are needed and welcome.

On the other, there numerous issues with the volume of what is being discussed, how the initiatives are being delivered, NGO capacity to engage in so many initiatives at once, and how the initiatives relate to the landscape. Key aspects include:

- How will the initiatives complement each other? Will they address what the past Environmental Commissioner of Ontario called a piecemeal approach, or make things worse?
- How will transitions and future operations be administered? Will the proposed creation of a Great Lakes Guardian Council weaken the roles of other agencies?
- Many organizations have been calling for years for increased budgets to enable MOECC and MNRF to meet their mandates. Will new policy direction be complemented with realistic discussions about implementation?
- How will Ontario address current gaps in funding and other resources for conservation authorities, accurate and up-to-date mapping, natural heritage inventories, meaningful data from initiatives such as Ontario's Low Water Response Programs, cumulative monitoring, etc?
- Are there other needs and assets we are ignoring? What is the mid-term plan for Source Protection Committees? Why the heck weren't they involved in the recent debacle around Municipal Water Sustainability Plans? Don't know about these? See our blog post of September 2.

The OHI will be participating in as many of the discussions as possible. We urge our sister organizations to get involved, to have a voice, and to assess opportunities for collective work within regional collaborations such as the Credit River Alliance, CONE, the Grand River Network, STORM, and other organizations.

This is a time, perhaps more than ever, to raise our voices and share our concerns.

Talk to you downstream,

Andrew McCammon

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