

April 4, 2014

The Honourable David Orazietti, MPP
Minister of Natural Resources
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3

Dear Minister;

RE: Comments by Member Cindy Forster – Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

On March 20th, 2014 Member Cindy Forster rose in the House with comments regarding the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. We respect the efforts that the member, Ms. Forster has taken to address the concerns of her constituents. I am writing to clarify some inaccuracies in the information presented and also provide some insight regarding recent operational decisions as they relate to the concerns expressed.

Upon being made aware of the concerns, we have attempted to meet with member Forster directly to clarify the issues raised. We regret that there has been no indication that member Forster or her staff made contact with the NPCA board members or its staff to verify information or facts prior to her comments in the House. We have requested a meeting with member Forster in response to her questions to the minister in the legislature. We have not received a reply at this time.

As you noted in the legislature, these concerns will be better addressed with the municipalities. We would suggest it should be done through their appointed board members. By way of background, board members of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Board are appointed by the member municipalities; in Niagara's case this includes 12 members appointed by Niagara Region, 2 members appointed by the City of Hamilton and 1 member by Haldimand County. Members bring a broad cross section of experience to the board and are very committed to fulfilling the objects of the authority as stated in the Conservation Authorities Act '...to establish and undertake in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals.' R.S.O. 1990, c. C. 27 s. 20. To that point, we encourage the member to speak to the board chair.

As stated by member Forster, the conservation authority board recently approved its Strategic Plan 2014-2017, a document that sets out the goals, values, objectives and vision of the NPCA and will guide decisions concerning program and project priorities in keeping with its mandate. The plan was undertaken and completed through a full public process that provided six separate opportunities for public participation. As you can appreciate, throughout the process we sought and received input from watershed residents across all sectors to ensure balanced decision making. Decisions are made taking all viewpoints into account with the NPCA working towards watershed management policies that balance both economic and environmental needs.

The plan addresses' streamlining the way NPCA delivers all its services in order to meet a mixture of community program needs.

Within that context, operational changes have been recommended in order to streamline the way the NPCA delivers services including a pragmatic solution-based process for processing permit applications under our jurisdiction. This is done in an effort to ensure fiscal responsibility for long term program delivery. This

includes a full and open review of our land acquisition criteria and management options of current land holdings.

Contrary to the comments made by member Forster, the emphasis of our Strategic Plan does not refocus our efforts towards land disposal and development. The NPCA acknowledges that our mandate is to conserve and protect environmentally sensitive and significant land within our jurisdiction.

There are no plans in the near future for the NPCA to sell any of its lands. In fact, the NPCA recently made a significant environmental purchase of property in the Township of Wainfleet which includes population/habitat for the Fowler's Toad. The 15 acre acquired lands was a part of a larger parcel which has been part of the long term acquisition strategy and was acquired at a cost below the appraised value. In addition to the habitat protection, the lands provide opportunities for environmental interpretation and additional public beach access on the largely privately owned shoreline of Lake Erie. This acquisition is also consistent with the Lakefront Enhancement Strategy recently approved by the Niagara Region. The NPCA will be undertaking a comprehensive master planning exercise for this new property with full public participation opportunities.

In closing, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person, at your convenience, to reiterate our commitment to fulfilling the responsibilities of a Conservation Authority. We have also extended an invitation to member Forster and look forward to addressing the concerns of her constituents.

Sincerely



D. Bruce Timms, P.Eng.

Chairman, NPCA

Regional Councillor, St. Catharines, Regional Municipality of Niagara

cc: Cindy Forster, MPP
Conservation Ontario
Regional Municipality of Niagara, Chair & Council
City of Hamilton, Mayor & Council
County of Haldimand, Chair & Council
Welland Mayor & Council
Port Colborne Mayor & Council
Thorold Mayor & Council
Pelham Mayor & Council
Niagara Falls Mayor & Council
Niagara-on-the-Lake Mayor & Council
Fort Erie Mayor & Council
West Lincoln Mayor & Council
Grimsby Mayor & Council
St. Catharines Mayor & Council
Wainfleet Mayor & Council
Lincoln Mayor & Council
MPP Jim Bradley
MPP Tim Hudak
MPP Wayne Gates
MPP Toby Barrett
MPP Paul Miller
MPP Andrea Horwath
MPP Monique Taylor
MPP Linda Jeffrey