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October 9, 2024

Adelaide Metcalfe

Municipality of Middlesex Centre
10227 Ilderton Rd., RR 2

Bluewater

Ilderton, ON
NOM 2A0

Central Huron

Greetings Mayor DeViet and Council,

Huron East

I am writing you on behalf of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors. I would like to bring to your attention the impact of the decision by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry of Ontario, Graydon Smith, to freeze the fees conservation authorities can charge in regard to planning, development, and permitting fees, and ask for your support in requesting that the decision be reversed, and the freeze lifted.

Lambton Shores

Lucan Biddulph

Middlesex Centre

The Minister issued a Ministers Direction (attached) on December 28, 2022. As stated by the Minister in the direction, "The purpose of this Direction, which is effective from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, is to require a conservation authority not to change the amount of the fee it charges or the manner in which it determines the fee for any program or service that may be provided by the conservation authority. This relates to reviewing and commenting on planning and development related proposals or land use planning policies, or for permits issued by conservation authorities."

North Middlesex

Perth South

South Huron

Warwick

The Minister issued a second Direction (attached) on December 13, 2023, extending the freeze on fees to December 31, 2024. This Direction was further confirmed in a letter from the Ministry (attached) dated February 16, 2024.

West Perth

The Direction justified the freeze as a way to assist in reaching the goal of Bill 23 (1.5 million homes in 10 years). It stated that, "A number of these changes affect conservation authorities and are intended to support faster and less costly approvals, streamline conservation authority processes, and help make land suitable for housing available for development."



While it is understood that freezing the development and application fees has had a significant impact on conservation authorities located in high-growth areas of the province, conservation authorities which are not in high growth areas, such as the ABCA, are also feeling the effects.

These conservation authorities must also meet reduced timelines to review and comment on applications since the changes of Bill 108 and 109 came into effect. Smaller conservation authorities with fewer resources are finding it difficult to adjust their levels of service to respond to these changes. The ABCA is one of those conservation authorities.

These changes are starting to lead to higher costs which, due to the fee freeze, can only be addressed by levying member municipalities for the extra costs which in turn is being downloaded to their residents through higher taxes.

I ask you to join in signing the attached letter to the Minister asking for a reversal of the Direction to freeze the fees for planning, development, and permitting. Lifting the freeze on fees will enable the ABCA to limit the levy asks to member municipalities by recovering more of the costs associated with planning, development, and permitting, from those that are using the service.

Sincerely,



Marissa Vaughan, Chair
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors

Encl.

Cc: Michael DiLullo, CAO; James Hutson, Clerk; Wayne Shipley, ABCA Director