

Environment e-newsletter

Hello, and best wishes for 2010.

Just before the new legislative session starts, I'd like to bring you up-to-date on some of the environmental issues likely to be on our plate. Sadly, there's no shortage. But as always, I remain hopeful of making real progress-the kind the environment commissioner says Ontario urgently needs.

Empowering citizens to fight massive development

Ontario lacks laws to block what are called SLAPP lawsuits, Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, which put local citizens on the hook for huge legal bills if they dare trigger a hearing into new projects. Ontario's environment commissioner is appalled, and I am, too. Despite the government's rhetoric, sprawl continues to chew up valuable greenspace and contributes to Ontario spending more on roads than public transit.

The former minister concerned, Jim Watson, refused to acknowledge the need to get rid of SLAPP suits. Even as local groups in Simcoe County continue to be pummeled by the developer behind a truly monstrous project on Lake Simcoe's shores. Yes, the same Lake Simcoe the government says can't take much more.

Even when they're wrong, they're right

Speaking of Simcoe County, I'm still working with groups and First Nations fighting a truly dim-witted decision. The new county dump, Site 41 was approved by mistake. Everyone agrees there was a mistake, and the location is inappropriate.

But despite agreeing there is a mistake, the provincial government refuses to correct it. This makes a mockery of environmental impact laws and is an injustice that urgently needs correcting.

Bottled water

Despite having some of the world's cleanest drinking water, straight from the tap, the federal government spent \$15.6 million since 2004 on bottled water. I'm trying to make the Ontario government join the growing list of jurisdictions that don't buy bottled water, and need your help.

Already, 71 municipalities across Canada and two universities have banned bottled water, as well as six school boards imposing restrictions. The provincial government should, too.

I'm working with the Polaris Institute to get Ontario on board. If you haven't yet, please let your MPP know you expect him or her to do their bit to stop this waste of money and environmental blight. Visit InsidetheBottle.org for more information.

As you can see, there are plenty of things to do. That's sadly unsurprising, but with your help I am hopeful of pushing a reluctant provincial government into action this year.

All the best,
Peter Tabuns, MPP