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June 6, 2018

To the members of Wollaston Township Council

I am writing this letter to you as a resident of Wollaston Township concerned about the lack of adequate planning to ensure the long term health of Wollaston lake and surrounding environs.

I have been following the discussion of Council with regard to a possible “Lake Capacity Study” and strongly believe it is time for Council to demonstrate leadership and develop a strategy for protecting the overall health of our shared resource, Wollaston Lake, for generations to come.

While I support deputy reeve Fuerth’s assertion that as a community we must seek out and adopt proactive, best practices, with respect to the current and future planning and stewardship of Wollaston Lake, I disagree with his reference suggesting that Lake Simcoe, at 205 times the surface area of Wollaston Lake, is a valid comparator. There are a number of other lakes – and a great deal of examples – that better support an examination of actions relevant for Wollaston.

One example of a relevant data source not examined by Council is the MOECC Lake Shoreline Capacity handbook. Although Council has repeatedly referred to the handbook, it has failed to date to acknowledge the following key paragraph from the executive summary:

“It should be emphasized that lakeshore capacity assessment addresses only some aspects of water quality — phosphorus, dissolved oxygen and lake trout habitat. Municipalities and lake planners also need to consider other pollutants (such as mercury, bacteria and petroleum products) and other sources of pollution (including industries, agriculture and boats). It must also be emphasized that water quality isn't the only important factor that should be considered in determining the development capacity of lakes. Factors such as soils, topography, hazard lands, crowding and boating limits may be as or more important than water quality. Finally, it's important to emphasize that, to be effective, the technical process of carrying out lakeshore capacity assessment must be followed by implementation — in other words, the information obtained must be incorporated into municipal official plans and policies.”

Any notion that lake health can be determined simply by measuring phosphorus readings is not accurate. Misinformation concerning the factors contributing to lake health can both lead to a sense of complacency among stakeholders, and lead to further damage to our shared water resource. To truly embrace best practices, all relevant factors potentially impacting Wollaston Lake must be understood and addressed within a comprehensive plan.

Over the past months I have sought the opportunity to speak at length with representatives from MOECC, Natural Resources Canada, The Canadian Water Resources Association, Watersheds Canada, The Land Between Conservation Organization, the MNRF, the City of Ottawa planning department, and a number of independent consultants with years of experience in fresh water lakes planning and management. Consistently they have recommended a community Lake Management/Stewardship plan development process as the best practice for Wollaston Township to pursue with respect to the current situation. The first step in this process is generally a “state of the lake” document for all stakeholders to use as a starting point.

I strongly urge the Council of Wollaston Township to research leading fresh water lakes management examples (please see the Sydenham Lake stewardship plan enclosed). As well, I submit, with this letter, an example of a state of the lake report and plan developed by White Lake.

I also enclose the 2017 Wollaston Lake Water quality report along with an email from Victor Castro (Surface Water Scientist, Technical Support Section, Eastern Region, MOECC) to me concurring with the findings of the 2017 Wollaston report. I encourage Council to read the report and to consider forming a committee to pursue a “State of the Lake” assessment of Wollaston Lake.

Wollaston Lake and Wollaston Township are at a critical juncture. We must take this opportunity to come together as a community to protect the lake and environs while continuing to pursue prudent economic development for the community. I have invested considerable effort and energy to date on this subject, and volunteer to participate in a committee, should Council decide to form one.