

THE TINY COTTAGER

Issue No. 53

A GEORGIAN BAY PERSPECTIVE

Spring/Summer 2019

President's Message

by PAUL COWLEY, CARUSOE BAY

As we head into the summer of 2019, I must inform you with great disappointment that 10 years after the Site 41 battle to protect our precious aquifer — holding what has been called the cleanest water in the world — it is once again a subject of concern.

Applications have been made by the owner of the Teedon Pit aggregate mine to expand the existing pit operations, extending the pit northward and renewing a permit to take millions of litres of water for aggregate washing. Expert concerns have been raised as to the impact of such actions on water quality of the aquifer. Decisions rest with three arms of the province — the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

Please read our article on this important topic (page 8) and help our community rally together to deal with this critical issue as we did with Site 41.

On a separate but also water-related front, you are likely aware of the increased water levels we are experiencing on Georgian Bay. We are not alone as our neighbours in Muskoka and indeed other parts of the province contend with extreme flooding conditions with the potential to cause damage in the millions of dollars. While climate change may be a significant contributor, more effective water level management by both provincial and local bodies could reduce the risk. We need a more effective overall water management program.

To gain a greater understanding of how these factors work together, please read the article by Mary Muter, Chair of the Georgian Bay Great Lakes Foundation, whose team continues to work on this complex problem and needs our support.

And finally, the other current initiative that you need to be aware of is the Regional Government Review now underway. Please see our coverage starting on this page. You can still provide feedback through the province's online survey or by submitting written comments.

Here's to a great summer!

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Photo by Vicky Monague

Peaceful protesters at the gates of Teedon Pit. See article on page 8.

Simcoe and Tiny Under Scrutiny of Regional Government Review

by SCOTT WILLIAMS, BLUEWATER BEACH

Simcoe County is one of eight regional municipalities singled out by the province for a regional government review. Announced in January 2019, the review is exploring opportunities to “improve governance, decision-making and service delivery.”

Why Simcoe County? Here's one possible reason: the council is conspicuous in its size. After the Ford government reduced the size of Toronto's council last fall almost in half, Simcoe County's council became the largest in the province. It comprises the warden, deputy warden, and the mayor and deputy mayor from the county's 16 communities. Tiny is represented by Mayor George Cornell and Deputy Mayor Steffen Walma. Mayor Cornell also serves as county warden.

To get a better understanding of what this could mean for Tiny, *The Tiny Cottager* asked Mayor Cornell a series of questions. His responses appear below. But first, more on the regional government review.

Under the terms of the review, two special advisors appointed by the minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing have until early summer to consult with the municipalities and the public, and submit recommendations to the province. They're looking for ways to improve efficiency, cut red tape, eliminate duplication and reduce costs, and have already conducted individual interviews with the heads of council for the regional municipalities, or upper-tier municipalities, and their lower-tier municipalities, such as Tiny. Up next: group consultations with all nine upper-tier councils as well as the mayors and regional chairs of Ontario.

The advisors are also seeking public input through three mechanisms:

- in-person meetings with the advisors. The window for this opportunity has now closed
- written submissions
- an online survey

The deadline for submitting input and responding to the survey, originally, April 23, has been extended to May 21. Find out more at www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-regional-government-review

The advisors, Ken Selling and Michael Fenn, have extensive experience in municipal affairs and are well

respected. Sounds good so far. But as *The Star* columnist Edward Keenan wrote shortly after the review was announced, “Beware provincial Tories looking to help. If you're a municipality, it's a hard-learned lesson based on experience.”¹

The experience Keenan is referring to is a series of municipal amalgamations imposed in the 1990s and 2000s by the Harris government's “Common Sense Revolution,” during which more than 800 municipalities were reduced by almost half that number. According to the Fraser Institute, “study after study has found that the benefits of municipal amalgamation have failed to materialize. Costs generally increase after amalgamation, largely due a harmonization of costs and wages, and increases in service-efficiency remain elusive.”²

This is not to say that the current regional government review will lead to amalgamations, or that if amalgamations occur they won't generate benefits. It's too soon to say.

1. “Ford government's regional review could be a good thing — or a very bad thing,” *The Star*, January 15, 2019.

2. Lydia Miljan, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Windsor and Zachary Spicer, SSHRC Post-Doctoral Fellow, Laurier Institute, “De-amalgamation in Ontario: Is it the answer,” published on behalf of the Fraser Institute in the *Financial Post*, July 15, 2015.

Q&A with George Cornell on the provincial government review

What strengths and weaknesses do you see in the current municipal structure in Tiny? In Simcoe County?

The municipal structure at the County of Simcoe, with its member municipalities and the cities of Barrie and Orillia, allows for economies of scale. This leads to efficient service delivery while creating larger capacity for significant infrastructure and capital projects that would be challenging for smaller municipalities to fund and execute.

Shared services with the county and other member municipalities allow for cost savings.

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