

**Presentation to:**  
**The Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway**  
**Township of Minden Hills**  
**Bill Obee, Councillor Ward 1**  
**August 14, 2007**

Panel Members, fellow Presenters, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the residents of the Township of Minden Hills.

Over the last several weeks, members of this panel have heard from citizens, organizations and municipalities throughout the Trent-Severn Waterway watershed. While I have no doubt that it will be neither the first time nor the last time that you will hear the general points I want to make today, it is important that you recognize that the decisions and recommendations you make will have specific impact on the future viability of the communities in our Township.

First, some background about our municipality.

The Township of Minden Hills was created in 2001 as an amalgamation of three lower tier municipalities: the Township of Lutterworth, the Township of Snowdon and the Township of Anson, Hindon & Minden.

Minden Hills is one of four municipalities in Haliburton County. The Township contains just over 20% of the land area in the County and is home to about 35% of the population.

The 2006 Census tells us that the permanent population of our Township is just over 5,500 and growing. An extremely important statistic in this context, however, is the fact that over 60% (2,397 of 6,220) of the residences in our Township house seasonal residents. Our economy is directly affected by the existence of these places and the people that use them and use our retail, trades and commercial establishments. If the owners do not have a consistent and usable water front, they will not be continuing to come to the area and our whole economy will be negatively affected.

The Township encompasses almost 850 square kilometres, and includes the communities of Carnarvon, Lochlin, Gelert, Irondale, Minden, Miners Bay, Moore Falls and each lake is a community in itself as they have associations that act very much like and have the feel of a community. This dedication is being shown to you by other very interested parties to these sessions.

The Gull River flows through the village of Minden, and forms a key supply route for water destined for the Trent-Severn; water that is supplied from the reservoir lakes in Haliburton County.

Minden, the County seat, was founded almost 150 years ago on the banks of the Gull River, and to this day, the river is a critical component of the economy. While the historical uses of the river for timbering and cargo transport no longer exist, our economy depends on the seasonal recreational use of the Gull and its feeder lakes by thousands of visitors every year.

Other mainstays of our economy are the manufacturing and construction industry sector, and the public sector, including government, health and education services.

From others you will hear many facts about how much the water level fluctuates. Our municipality does not have the resources to collect that kind of data in any comprehensive, on-going way. In fact, we believe we deserve to be given that data by the managers of the Waterway.

Rather than data points, my task is to provide you with some anecdotal descriptions of how the actions taken by the managers of the Waterway impact our community.

As you came through town today to get to this session, you crossed the Gull River in our downtown. A lot of work is being done on the river banks to enhance the looks of our municipality and encourage more people to come and enjoy it, with walking trails and benches. If, when they arrive there is a lack of water, it will certainly discourage them from returning.

Imagine if you will, that volume of water changing 5' or 6' feet vertically between morning and afternoon, and sometimes back again by evening. Sometimes the level stays low for several days then, unpredictably and without warning, comes back up.

Muddy banks get exposed. Docks hang high over the water, and then get semi-submerged. Boats moored at high water rest on the bottom. It is not a pretty sight.

Nowadays, far fewer people boat up the river from Gull Lake to buy their supplies in Minden or to listen to the Friday evening "Music by the Gull" programs, as they are never sure they will be able to get home again. Additionally, the effect this irregular flow has on riparian habitat, fish and amphibian species is significant.

The effect this has on the appearance of our downtown, the economy of which is dependent on a positive visitor experience, is also significant. No one wants to come back to visit the smelly Minden mudflats!

Those who live just below the dam speak of having to quickly get to safe ground when large volumes of water are suddenly released without warning.

Many residents recall when the volume of water has been let out so quickly that the riverbanks overflow, flooding nearby roads and basements. This is particularly a situation in spring when the reservoir lakes are holding too much water and have to be lowered. This creates problems for the

individuals in their homes and for the municipality in the maintaining of the roads. A detour through the arena is often required to accommodate the residents.

I could go on, but I'm sure you get the picture. While we acknowledge our role in as part of the reservoir system, and indeed we have more lakefront and economic benefit as part of the system than we would without, our Township would benefit from the water levels being managed so they change more gradually and in predictable ways.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there are three key issues our Township would like to emphasize for your consideration.

First, your decisions have the potential to protect and enhance the economy of our area. Conversely, rather than positive effects, your decisions could be detrimental to our Township's economic viability. Please do not fail us.

Second, we anticipate that you will recommend management practices and protocols that will maintain and improve the environmental health of our lakes and rivers and improve public safety.

Third, we expect that you will mandate a new governance structure that gives us a voice in the management of the Waterway and prescribes communication protocols that will supply municipal decision makers with much more information on which to base planning decisions and marketing initiatives.

One final point: Given the climatic change our world is experiencing, as evidenced by the drought-like conditions this summer, it is incumbent on the operators of the Waterway to ensure that valuable water resources are not wasted due to 'leakage' in the infrastructure. Our rivers and lakes would not need to be drawn down as much if there was a reduction in the leakage within the present system.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?