

Town of The Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, P.O. Box 310
Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

Correspondence for Planning and Development Services

Committee of the Whole, October 29th, 2024

RE: Feedback Request on Draft Municipal Charter for Watershed Security

Dear Madame Chair and Committee Members,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your unanimous support for the idea of a Watershed Summit during the July 15th Council meeting. The resolution passed in Council has been instrumental in advancing this important initiative, and we are pleased to provide you with an update.

The Steering Committee has made excellent progress since our initial meeting, establishing positive relationships through productive discussions. As a result, we are targeting June 2025 for the Summit. In line with the goals of the Summit, we have adopted the **Municipal Charter for Watershed Security** as a key framework. We believe this Charter will enable Summit participants to move expeditiously to identify common concerns and prioritize actions for watershed protection.

The **Municipal Charter for Watershed Security**, created by the Ontario Headwaters Institute (OHI), is currently in draft form. The OHI has circulated the Charter to various organizations and stakeholders across the province for their input, and is collecting feedback through social media, meetings, and a [public survey](#), which will remain open until the end of October. The final version will be released in early November.

We are now seeking your valuable feedback on the draft Charter. At this time, we invite feedback from Councillors and Town Staff, either through the survey or via any discussions you suggest. We also hope that early awareness of the Charter will prove beneficial as the Town continues its efforts in watershed security.

We plan to present the finalized Charter to Town Council on November 12th, and any advice or comments from this Committee on the Charter will be welcome and help us deliver a constructive and impactful Summit in June 2025.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing your thoughts to ensure the success of the Summit and the protection of our local watersheds.

Warm regards,

Paul Reale, Chair, Watershed Summit

Andrew McCammon, Executive Director, Ontario Headwaters Institute

A Municipal Charter for Watershed Security in Ontario

As Ontario municipalities deliver core services that impact the health of our waters, including those related to land use planning, drinking water, storm water, and sanitary sewage, and as Ontario's population and development pressures grow at a time when the climate and biodiversity crises require strategic direction, it is more important than ever that municipalities integrate land use and watershed planning.

A constructive step along this path would be for municipalities to develop a Charter for Watershed Security - the protection of our aquatic resources to safeguard regional ecological integrity, social wellbeing, and economic vitality.

Indeed, such a Charter might be the best way to ensure that municipalities meet their obligations under the Provincial Planning Statement to use the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for planning as well as to protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water.

The Charter could have the following elements:

- A commitment to integrate land use and watershed planning;
- Embracing a whole watershed approach to ensure that normal flows of clean water enter the municipality from upstream communities, as well as to assure the same for communities downstream;
- Undertaking a water resource inventory as well as an ecological land classification study and using the information to create both a natural heritage system strategy and a biodiversity strategy to identify and protect key ecological features and functions for local watershed health.
- Early direction to key municipal departments, such as economic development, permitting, transportation, and works, to integrate their land use planning responsibilities with watershed planning, including consideration of the impacts of climate change on local watersheds;
- Establishing watershed and/or sub-watershed targets, including restoration targets where necessary, for areas in natural heritage, wetlands, streamside vegetation, and urban canopies and greenspace;
- Ensuring before and after terrestrial and aquatic monitoring of the immediate impacts of specific development, including infrastructure, as described by a municipal protocol;
- Performing cumulative monitoring on a regular basis and implementing adaptive management to redress unacceptable conditions, and,
- Encouraging sound stewardship practices for all land in the municipality.

Comments and suggestions on this draft Charter are welcome through the end of October.

Promoting Watershed Security in Ontario

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The Town of The Blue Mountains Council Meeting

Title: Councillor Maxwell Notice of Motion Re: Watershed Summit
Date: Monday, July 15, 2024

Moved by: Councillor Maxwell

Seconded by: Councillor Porter

WHEREAS a watershed is an area that catches rain and snow, allowing water to seep into marshes, streams, rivers, lakes, and underground aquifers, effectively making everyone a resident within a watershed;
AND WHEREAS the Town of The Blue Mountains is blessed with several watersheds, many of which contain rivers, streams, lakes, springs, and aquifers that transcend municipal boundaries, connecting us through our shared reliance on Georgian Bay as part of the Great Lakes;

AND WHEREAS our rapidly growing municipality faces increased pressure on its natural environment, which is vital for the community's well-being and is a primary reason many residents choose to live here;

AND WHEREAS there is a critical need for a municipal water management plan that emphasizes collaboration with neighboring municipalities, agencies, and citizen groups to protect our watersheds, given our shared reliance on these resources;

AND WHEREAS human actions, such as ecosystem and landscape changes, sedimentation, pollution, and climate change, significantly impact our natural water resources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council supports, in principle, the organization of a summit focusing on the protection and management of our watersheds, bringing together community members, organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders to contribute their expertise and perspectives;

AND THAT Council is open to encouraging and supporting external organizations in taking the lead to develop and facilitate this summit, using their knowledge and resources to aid in the creation of a robust municipal water management plan.

YES: 6

NO: 0

CONFLICT: 0

ABSENT: 1

The motion is Carried

YES: 6

Mayor Matrosovs

Councillor Ardiel

Councillor Hope

Councillor Maxwell

Councillor McKinlay

Councillor Porter

NO: 0

CONFLICT: 0