Re OPP Billing Reform

Dear Premier Wynne,

I am a property owner in Haliburton County and I would like to voice my objection to an unfair tax increase proposed by your government as part of the OPP Billing Reform. This proposed tax increase is a direct result of a new Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) funding model, which is fundamentally flawed in design and does not adhere the directions given by the Auditor General to the OPP.

In 2012, the Auditor General of Ontario released his annual report. Four key points in that report concerned the OPP. These points were:

- "Ontario has the highest per capita policing costs (OPP and municipal own forces) in the country at $294 compared to the national average of $268 (2008 data)."
- "The overall cost of OPP services for municipalities from 2007 to 2011 increased an average of 29% for those with contracts and 19% for those without, or up to three times the annual inflation rate.
- The way the OPP charges municipalities for its services was complex and onerous for both the force and municipalities.
- A per capita costing methodology is not a substitute for dealing with unsustainable increases in policing costs.

The thrust of the recommendations is for the OPP to find greater efficiencies in its operations. Instead, your government exacerbated the high cost of policing in Ontario by granting substantial pay increases to the OPP, effective January 2014. Your government has now tabled a new costing model (based on the number of households) to pay for those increases. This was in conflict with the fourth point in the Auditor's report (as stated above) and will have a very adverse effect on many rural municipalities.

For example, in Haliburton County (one of the poorest in the province), the proposal would result in an overall tax increase of $5.2 million. Based on an assessment of $500,000 the increases will be:

- $458 in Algonquin Highlands (36% more),
- $310 in Dysart (33% more),
- $473 in Highlands East (25% more),
- $294 in Minden Hills (20% more).

As you can see, these tax increases are excessive. Many in our County cannot afford increases of this magnitude.

One of the biggest flaws in the tax proposal is that a per household model was used and is based on the MPAC property list, which includes seasonal residents and well as full-time residents. Policing costs, simplistically put, are largely driven by the number of people to be policed as in the more there are the greater it costs to police them. Given that the Townships in Haliburton County have a large percentage of seasonal residents this translates into a smaller population to be policed when compared to other Townships and Counties that don't. As a result it is unfair to charge the same rate per household for Haliburton County as used for households in areas of the Province where there are very few seasonal residents. This flaw is further compounded by the absence of any consideration upon the policing costs caused by commercial, industrial and institutional activities all of which have an impact upon policing costs. Haliburton County has very little of these yet is expected to pay the same per household as other Counties which do.

There are also significant questions regarding the manner in which the total cost of the OPP has been divided between those costs arising from municipal policing and those costs related to their provincial mandate which are not to be charged to the municipalities.

In the interests of achieving a fair and equitable distribution of OPP policing costs across the municipal tax base I am requesting:

1. Implementation of the proposed revisions to the OPP municipal costing model be suspended pending a review with consultation to include those municipalities impacted by such a change
2. The split of the overall OPP costs between municipal policing costs and provincial mandated policing costs be reviewed to ensure it is current, accurate and fair
3. A phased approach be adopted to phase in any cost increases over multiple years

A response is expected and would be appreciated.

Respectfully,

[insert your name and address here]

Cc My Local MPP