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London City Mayor and Council
London, Ontario

Subject: Springbank Dam and "One River" EA Comments arising from the Civic Works Committee Report March 8, 2016

The March 8th Civic Works Committee report and public consultation presents London's new Mayor and Council with an outstanding opportunity to show leadership, save money, demonstrate its "green" intentions, and secure widespread approval by:

- Rejecting the "master EA" study that would lump Springbank dam with "Back to the River"
- Rejecting the Springbank Dam restoration altogether, and
- Directing staff to study and report on options for the Springbank structure that will ensure a free running river.

By so doing, Council would be acting consistent with the North American pattern of decommissioning old dams while responding positively to:

- The widespread public opposition to the dam and reservoir
- The rights and concerns of people and municipalities downstream
- Species at Risk in the proposed reservoir area (Eastern Spiny Soft Shelled Turtles, et al), and
- Well documented concerns about water quality in the Thames.

Many Paddlers Prefer a Free River

Because some London canoeists have supported a dam, Council may be under the mistaken impression that all paddlers are in favour. As a recreational canoeist with many years of river paddling, I can say that most paddlers I know oppose dams and are often the first to object. I much prefer a free running river as do my friends, and so I regard the dam advocates as an unusual segment.

Separate EA's are Better

At the March 8th Civic Works meeting, city staff proposed lumping the Springbank Dam with the much larger "Back to the River" project in one EA. This proposal will have many negative effects including:

1. Unnecessary complication. The "Back to the River" project is not dependent on the dam reconstruction (according to the project Chair)
2. Mixing the two will delay and confuse the decision making on both
3. Mixing the two puts the "Back to the River" initiative at risk (as pointed out by the Urban League spokesman)
4. Combining the two will likely increase the total EA cost because the level of study necessary for the "Back to the River" will be much higher than for any of the options for the Springbank Dam.

The EA for Springbank alone will be simpler because the options for a free flowing river are:

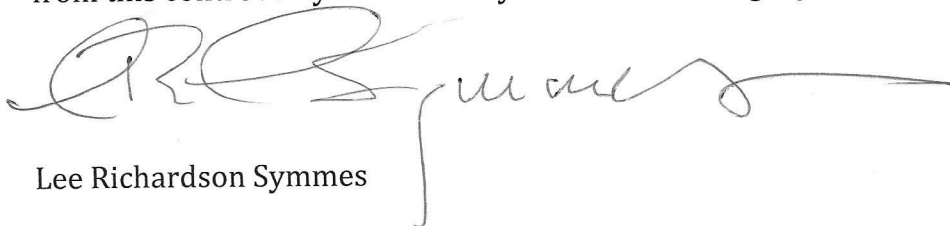
- *Continue as we are* – no changes (no EA, no cost), or
- *Remove the gates and machinery* but leave the structure (may require a very basic EA because the work is very local and very short term), or
- *Re-purpose the dam for pedestrians* (may require a basic EA , depending on the design and opposite side impacts), or
- *De-commission the dam* and remove the structure (will require a EA because of short term and local effects while removing concrete etc – but still very narrow in terms and modest in cost) and probably the best long term solution.

Since the Springbank options are all separate, shorter and simpler, it should not be lumped with “Back to the River. Sharing studies is fine – locking the process together is not.

A Costly Compromise

I have one additional comment. In search of a compromise, some have asked if having the dam closed for a shorter period might reduce the negatives sufficiently. This would involve all the most costly studies and the capital costs of rebuilding the dam, but would retain most of the negatives. A shorter season would be too much cost to benefit too few on a project that would ultimately embarrass the City of London. Perhaps something could be done to enhance paddling facilities at Fanshawe or Sharon Creek reservoirs.

I urge Council to take advantage of the positive opportunities that have emerged from this controversy and I thank you for considering my views.



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