

6 March 2016

Dear Mayor Brown, Councillors and Civic Works Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a private citizen on this important subject. I have been a Londoner for almost 70 years. I swam in the Thames River and its tributaries in the fifties and sixties and rowed and canoed on it since then. In the early 1970s, I worked with Dr. Douglas Bocking and others to raise funds to build the Joe McManus Canoeing and Rowing facility and then to establish related recreational and competitive programmes for Londoners. Since then, I have also served with others to host rowing events on the river in my capacities as president of local, provincial, national and international rowing groups. Also as a professional historian I have written about the impact of the river and its importance to the community over the past two centuries. And nine years ago, I moved with my wife to the Thames Valley Golf Course area to take advantage of, and to admire, like many of our neighbours, the beauty of this heritage river in its many forms. I believe that a silent majority of Londoners support high water for five months of the year. They have demonstrated great patience in waiting for city councillors to resolve the issue in a timely and a proper manner. This trust has occurred despite the fact that the rowing and canoe clubs' membership and equipment have been decimated by the delay.

My vision of the way forward supports:

1. a healthy, vibrant, beautiful, functional water course between The Forks and the Springbank Dam (and elsewhere).
2. the consensus arrangement which has served Londoners so very well for so many decades: high water from May to October in the area noted immediately above.
3. an environmental assessment to identify the legal obligations, the environmental concerns and the appropriate alternatives to fairly and transparently decide the matter.

Additionally, I advocate this approach because of my belief that a *compromise solution will satisfy most locals*; that is, the residents

- who appreciate the aesthetics of a brimming river and the social, cultural and economic value and opportunity it provides to Londoners

- who believe that high water best complements the *Back to the River Project*
- who appreciate the fact that tradeoffs must occur, ones which balance environmental concerns and the desires of all interested parties
- who want to honour and reinstitute the longstanding, beneficial, excellent canoeing/rowing programs for high school, club, master and recreational rowers and paddlers
- who understand the importance of accessible central core recreational and competitive water sports and activities to the community
- who acknowledge that residents of east London are well served by Fanshawe Dam, while Springbank Dam serves the same purpose for west Londoners
- who relish the continuation of historical sports in historical venues (for example, since early times Londoners have used the Thames for recreational purposes – at least one Harris male of Eldon House, for instance, was a rower)
- who understand that the Springbank Dam is not the root cause of the river’s pollution problem. The challenge is above Fanshawe Dam. Removing the Springbank Dam will not by itself produce a healthy river, nor will it sufficiently improve conditions for friends in communities below the dam
- who understand that with more than 150 dams east of Fanshawe Dam the Thames river in and near the historic heart of London is not free flowing
- who believe that much of the “science” thus far used to argue for a decommissioning of the dam is selective, outdated and flawed.
- who support James Shelley’s argument that “increasing the usability, accessibility, functionality, and aesthetics of this ... stretch of river is our best hope for assuring its health in future generations”
- who desire a made-in-London solution

Thank you,

Dr. Michael F. (Mike) Murphy

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