

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



Ontario Conservation Centre

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April 5, 2018

E-MAILED
04/05/18

Mayor Doug Craig and
Members of Council
City of Cambridge
50 Dickson Street
PO Box 669
Cambridge, Ontario
N1R 5W8

Dear Mayor Craig and Members of Council:

Subject: Riverside Dam Rebuild

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest non-profit, conservation-based organization representing 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 740 member clubs. We, along with many other stakeholders, have been actively supportive and engaged in collaborative fisheries management planning and projects in the Grand River watershed for more than 30 years.

Recent reports have identified that the City of Cambridge Council has rejected the recommendations presented by staff and outlined in the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment for naturalization of the Speed River through the removal of the Riverside Dam. The preferred alternative to rebuild the dam, as unanimously voted on by council, is viewed by many as counter-productive and a potential misuse of taxpayer dollars. Moreover, the rebuild does not take into consideration the environmental significance and positive ecological function that would result from the removal of this dam.

The Riverside Dam negatively impacts sediment transport resulting in the accumulation of fine materials in the headpond region above the dam. As presented by the City of Cambridge, nearly 13,000 m³ of sediment has built up over the years, moreover, sampling has identified elevated concentrations of zinc, cadmium, copper, and lead that exceeded provincial guidelines. Rebuilding of the dam would inevitably result in a similar polluted impoundment.

The City's own presentation of alternative solutions for the Riverside Dam identifies various benefits associated with the naturalization of the Speed River including: restored fluvial function, improved water quality, improved aquatic habitat, restored fish passage, improved terrestrial habitat, lower cost, reduced flooding and protection of infrastructure, as well as improved public safety. Despite these benefits, the influence of a select few outweighed the importance of removing this dam and returning this region of the Speed River to a more natural state.

The City of Cambridge noted that naturalization of the Speed River supports functional, natural, and economic elements, but falls short from a social perspective. The OFAH is concerned about this viewpoint, as a free flowing river provides many important social benefits, including enhanced recreation and aesthetics that help to improve the quality of life for many in the community. The vote to rebuild the dam also conflicts with Indigenous perspectives. It is our understanding through dialogue with the Six Nations of the Grand River that naturalization over the dam rebuild is preferred.

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The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process included the concerns and comments of many stakeholders, the majority of which supported water quality and riverine environmental enhancement by removing this dam. The scientific, engineering, and technical expertise was sound.

For the socio-economic and environmental reasons presented to date, the OFAH recommends reconsidering the dam rebuild and re-evaluating the benefits of naturalization, where appropriate, such as in the case of the Riverside Dam. We would be more than happy to further discuss an approach that balances sound science, ecological function, and a naturalized river that will provide benefits for the current generation and those to come.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Weir', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Adam Weir
OFAH Fisheries Biologist

AW/gh

cc: OFAH Zone J Executive
OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager of Policy
OFAH Fish & Wildlife Staff