

Via email to: mmeilleur.mpp@liberal.ola.org



January 24, 2014

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
13th Floor, George Drew Building
25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1Y6

Attention: The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, MPP

Dear Madame Minister;

Please find below our organization's comments and concerns related to the proposed new OPP Billing Model.

The Ontario Federation of Cottagers' Associations, Inc. (FOCA) and our members have been an integral part of rural and waterfront Ontario for over 50 years.

FOCA is a Province-wide association that represents over 500 waterfront property owners' groups located in 280 rural Ontario municipalities, with 50,000 member families. Through and on behalf of these members FOCA speaks to the priority issues of Ontario's 250,000 residential waterfront property owners.

Ontario's waterfront property owners are a major economic force in Ontario, amongst other things, contributing well over \$800 million annually in property taxes, and collectively providing the financial means to construct and maintain municipal infrastructure and local services in rural Ontario. As such they have a vested and long-term interest in sound and balanced community governance and funding, and in a viable and affordable rural economy in Ontario.

While FOCA acknowledges that there are ongoing challenges to the affordability of policing services in general, and the need to ensure these costs are fairly distributed, the proposed model is a recipe for significant fiscal upset across the Province.

A fundamental question from FOCA is related to the motivation for this proposed change to the formula already in place.

Our members and their municipal representatives are deeply concerned at both the scope and speed of the proposed changes to the OPP billing model. Policing costs are among the largest budget lines in municipal budgets, and as such, fundamental and large-scale shifts in these costs can cause significant hardship for the municipality and by direct extension, to local property owners.

None of the cost of policing is allocated to the commercial or industrial sector, so the entire burden including any dramatic shifts, are paid for by homeowners.

The new Billing Model proposes charging each municipality a flat \$260 per household to cover “base” costs (i.e. fixed costs) and further charging each municipality for actual calls for service. It is entirely unclear why the OPP’s fixed vs. variable cost split is so high at 73/27.

When applying the new Billing Model in rural municipalities, the year over year differences to municipal budgets can be enormous. This automatically requires a huge property tax increase for all residents.

In addition, many of our members are resident in their communities only seasonally and as such are modest consumers of police services – within communities that are low crime areas to start with. On this basis, a high flat fee applied to all residential properties, as proposed, unfairly burdens the rural and especially the seasonal taxpayer.

Given the huge potential cost increase from this new Billing Model we would respectfully request that any proposed changes be subject to a more robust review, in order to ensure individual municipalities and their residents will not be unduly put upon through any new model.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and look forward to your reply at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Terry Rees, Executive Director

on behalf of Karl Fiander, FOCA Committee Chair

cc Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance csousa.mpp@liberal.ola.org
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