

OPINION EDITORIAL STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cochrane Mayor Peter Politis | Cochrane, Ontario – July 26, 2013:

ANY ONTC SOLUTION MUST BE BUILT COLLABORATIVELY AND FOR THE LONG TERM

In the latest CTV news piece around the Minister's Advisory Committee on the ONTC (MAC), I again found myself feeling less than inspired about the future of this critical northern asset. While the employees and families of the operation continue to express their desire to work with the Province and the MAC, the province strangely continues to be less than receptive to that. Minister Gravelle's response to the employees who are basically saying that they understand that unusual changes are needed to the role employees play in the future of the ONTC, is to say thanks but you need to speak directly to the employer about that not me or the MAC. Curiously though, Minister Gravelle's own Ministry keeps telling the employees and ONTC in return, that their direction from the Minister is to keep divesting and until that changes there is nothing to talk about.

This kind of political manoeuvring is unfortunately what is at the heart of this whole \$790 million fiasco, where the province acted hastily in initiating the catastrophic course to begin with, despite their advisors being on record warning against it. At the same time, the province just seems to refuse to accept the many overtures to step down on the matter to do what's actually best for Northerners. While I have all the confidence in the world in my fellow Mayors sitting on the MAC and doing the best they can with what the government has given us as a region, I struggle with the historical and present facts suggesting that optics may be the priority here as opposed to the "best and right" solution. Consider this for a moment, Cochrane has 154 families directly and another 200 indirectly relying on the ONTC; has one of a handful of world class tourist attractions in all of Northern Ontario relying on the ONTC; along with North Bay has the best multi-modal transportation dynamics that would require rail to work; and has a phone utility relying on the ONTC that offsets about \$1,000,000 of taxes in our community every year. Cochrane has always been at the forefront of this issue fighting and breathing life into it when the legislature broke for the summer (even when others gave up). As well, we have a demonstrated history of finding creative solutions to the challenges we face as northerners. In all fairness though, our solutions require everyone to be involved in developing THEIR futures together.

How is it that Cochrane, one of the top 3 impacted community's has been left out? How is it that the employees and families who have some of the greatest vested interest in the long term survival of this critical northern asset have been left out? How can we have confidence that the province who hastily ignored everyone and started down this ill-conceived path regardless, who suddenly say they now realize their mistake and will now get the key stakeholders involved but really don't, will now do what's actually best for northerners as opposed to looking for credit for attempting to solve a \$790 million catastrophe they created themselves? More importantly, while upward of 4,000 families and an entire region's future hang in the balance, will small politics continue to be the priority over the critical needs of the North instead?

Minister Gravelle, on behalf of all northerners, I politely urge you to revisit this whole approach and appreciate that the employees and ALL key stakeholders need to be part of rethinking this critical northern asset, to truly find the "best" solution.

