

Caledonia Update -- The Cost of Caledonia

Caledonia Victims Project

From: Barrett, Toby [toby.barrett@pc.ola.org]
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2010 10:19 AM
Subject: Caledonia Update -- The Cost of Caledonia

Toby here.

Pasted below is my latest newspaper column which was written last week.

With respect to recently-reported indications of the future of DCE, I value your feedback -- please keep in touch.

Take care.

Toby

How much are these land disputes costing us?

By MPP Toby Barrett

February 28th, marks four years to the day that Haldimand and area began bearing the brunt of the illegal occupation of a Caledonia subdivision.

Four years of chaos, and a compromised policing and justice system, have taken their toll. As costs accumulate for the ongoing dispute, the real toll, both personally and in lost economic opportunity, is much less obvious.

Recently we saw an out-of-court settlement between Dave Brown/Dana Chatwell, and the Ontario Government/Ontario Provincial Police over claims the OPP abandoned the family to chaos and lawlessness. But as those suffering through these past four years are well aware, the Brown/Chatwell harassment is the tip of the iceberg.

I think of other residents on Argyle, as well as Braemar, Thistlemor, Kinross, Oneida and Sixth Line, all adjacent to Douglas Creek Estates. I think of the lost economic opportunity across Haldimand, Brantford and Brant as investments are scared away by the threat of land disputes.

Aside from the social and psychological stress Caledonia and much of Haldimand and Brant has been under over four years, real investment has been lost and development has ground to a halt.

Just two years into the ongoing standoffs, I presented a locally-derived accounting of lost economic activity from Brantford to Dunnville before the Standing Committee on Estimates – it came in at \$4.1 billion, rising to \$7 billion if one includes other occupations and protests across the province. These are figures of two years ago.

Testimony before Ontario's Finance Committee—three years ago – pegged the drop in property values of homes adjacent to DCE at anywhere from 15 to 40 per cent. There was also an unconfirmed figure of \$150 million in additional expenses at Imperial Oil, Ontario Power Generation and the former Stelco, because the railway was barricaded for a month.

5/3/2010

For four years I have been apprising the Ontario Legislature of the insanity of the Niagara to Middleport electricity corridor being sabotaged and halted. This was a \$116 million project. And whoever torched the Caledonia Transfer Station caused \$1 million in direct damage plus four years of security costs up and down the system.

And Brantford lost Kingspan with the jobs and millions of investment promised, plus being sued to boot. Is anyone keeping track of the millions of dollars of other business delayed or scared away in this city alone?

Dunnville did not get a Walmart, a TSC store and a major food chain because of threats. Throughout Haldimand you rarely hear a skilsaw or hammer as builders have had to confront masked trespassers. Hundreds of homes have not been built bringing negative repercussions for the sustainability of Haldimand's socio-economic growth and tax revenue.

I have also received recent data that the Ontario Government has been under-reporting the costs of policing since the occupation in 2006. The report states: "It is entirely possible that the total number of man hours spent in Caledonia could be as high as two million, with an average cost as high as \$100 per man hour, or even more. Based on these figures, the cost of policing could be \$200 million, which is over four times more than the province has reported." It concludes, "Dalton McGuinty is hiding the true costs of Caledonia from Ontario taxpayers."

So just how much are these disputes costing us?

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