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## Tiny resident makes plea to the premier

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The following is an open letter to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Dear Mr. Premier,

Re: A proposed "Strategic Plan" by the Township of Tiny,

I am writing to you personally to inform you of a political situation that is rapidly worsening in our small vacation community called Tiny Township, on the shores of Georgian Bay. It's one that has quite serious ramifications for all the vacationing public of Southern Ontario -from Oakville to Orangeville, from Oshawa to Orillia and all points in between.

In the past couple of months, things have gotten considerably worse: the Tiny Township Council is on the point of passing a kind of "omnibus bill" (they're calling it a "Strategic Plan") within which is buried a clause that will effectively ban all vacationers (both resident and non-resident), who do not own properties overlooking the water from using and enjoying vast tracts of our area's beaches.

These beaches have historically been used and enjoyed by all the public for almost 200 years; in the case of our beach, Ardmore Beach, since the first survey was completed in 1821. They were never officially declared "public" beaches, but, nonetheless, all the public -- both within Tiny Township as well as "day trippers" from many towns and cities in Southern Ontario -- have consistently been enjoying them as such for many, many, decades.

I'm certain this will make you equally as concerned as I am. I see you as a man of integrity, dignity. A father who knows full well the value of children -- especially those who live with no relief for most of the summer in humid, smog-filled city air -- having an opportunity to run, laugh and play during a sunny weekend afternoon on the sand and in the sparkling waters of our province's own amazing beaches. Well, Tiny's "Plan" will change all that.

This "Strategic Plan" is what's called a "sleeper" piece of legislation and they plan to pass it some time in December. The famous snow drifts of Simcoe County will bury just about any seasonal property owner who tries to get up here from the Big Smoke to object to it, just as surely as they've buried the real reason for passing it deep within the wording of the legislation itself. And don't think we haven't repeatedly asked council to provide us with the exact date they're thinking of voting on this "Plan." They simply won't give us an answer.

I am a summer resident in the area -- a single mother, semi-retired and going on 60, who has survived cancer twice and likes to spend summers at her tiny (no pun intended!) cabin to recover in serenity. It's "nothing to write home about" as they say, but what drew my extended family and now me to the place, more than four decades ago, is the spectacular and ineffable beauty of nearby Ardmore Beach. It's one of Tiny's finest. We like to think it's the jewel in the crown of similar vast sand beaches which delineate the Great Lakes Basin in Southern Ontario.

So I'm hoping you can now understand why my neighbours and I are so concerned about this very important issue that we've hastily formed a beach community association to deal with it. We have been appealing to the township's elected officials on the matter, but, so far, to no avail. They have remained curiously silent and that has only served to so heighten tensions here that, this summer, some folks here blew their stacks and engaged in behaviour that I can only tell you is really not representative of them or this area. It erupted in the cutting down and then burning of a local beachfront property fence, some very unfortunate assaults and even discharge of firearms. It's a sad and sorry mess, that's for certain and we're thinking we need someone with a whole lot more skill than our local township council to deal with it. Maybe you can have your Minister of Municipal Affairs bring some oversight to this matter?

At this point you might be saying, "Oh, that fence issue -we know all about that. Why is this woman writing me about that?" Well, sir, that fence issue is really only the smoke. The fire is burning in the council chamber of the

township offices: the Township of Tiny's Proposed Strategic Plan. When you first read it, you'll find it's a very well-crafted document that, on the face of it, uses all the right words.

It goes on about visions', guiding principles'; the need to "protect, nurture and enrich our heritage" and "respect" for "distinct cultures and traditions." So far, no one I know of would argue with that.

Well, here's the problem: there's another word in that document - a little word called "access" and it's being used in reference to the area's "recreational resources" ( read "beaches"). It's a little, innocuous word, but it's a scud missile of a word... for us and for all those beach daytrippers in that area of Southern Ontario.

"Access" as used by Tiny Township Council in their proposed Strategic Plan, means only the right to walk along the water's edge. Nothing more. And don't try stopping. This interpretation of the word "access" gives beachfront residents the clout to call police, who will arrive to get you to move along, keep going. It forever bars anyone who does not own property overlooking the water from putting down a towel to suntan, frolicking in the water with their kids and pets, lazing the day away on an inflatable raft watching their kids fish for minnows, play catch, fly a kite, have a picnic lunch or catch frogs in the myriad, cool artesian streams that intersect the vast expanses of crystal sand on their way to join the waters of Nottawasaga Bay. It ends all of that forever. It's just sickening.

We've also tried to talk to your Attorney General on this matter, too. And not only us. Save the Beaches, another group I've only just heard about, has been trying to get him to pay attention to the publicly little known fact that beachfront owners all along the eastern sand beaches of Nottawasaga Bay have been quietly but feverishly re-surveying their properties and pushing their lot lines all the way to the water's edge. Then they're re-submitting their new surveys to the Ontario Registry Office to place them on title and make them legal. That's in direct violation of Ontario's Boundaries Act. They're playing fast and loose with Ontario's laws and, so far, nothing is being done about it. All of this is in eager anticipation of the passing of this seemingly benign Strategic Plan'.

So, as you can see, Mr. Premier, it's all a big mess. We need someone with your type of leadership skills, the care and compassion for the recreational health and well being of all Ontarians, and the concern to uphold this province's laws to sort this situation out. I really hope you will read this letter personally and find it in your heart to speak for all those families in Ontario who look forward every year to, simply, going to the beach for another summer's day.

Isabella Bardoel Tiny Township

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