

News Release

STATEMENT ABOUT MISSISSIPPI-RIDEAU SOURCE PROTECTION COMMITTEE SELECTION

RIDEAU VALLEY, December 20, 2007 — A demonstration by the Ontario Landowners Association (OLA) was held this morning at the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) headquarters on Rideau Valley Drive. This peaceful OLA action was prompted by the appointment of two agricultural members to the local Source Protection Committee (SPC) through a process which the OLA does not agree with. Mississippi Valley Conservation and RVCA do not share the OLA point of view and we would like to clarify the situation.

The Conservation Authorities are strongly of the opinion that the selection and appointment of 15 people to our local SPC is an outstanding example of open, community-minded democracy in action.

There was a self-nomination process undertaken by the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition (OFEC) that produced two strong local candidates at a meeting in Perth on August 16. Those two candidates were never “removed” or “ejected” from the Committee. They were never on the Committee until appointed by the CA Boards. For whatever reason, only one of those two candidates followed through and made application to be a member as required under the OFEC rules. Further, the *Clean Water Act* required us to offer a two-month period for people to think about and apply to be SPC members. People wanting to represent the farm business community had until October 8 in our watersheds to apply according to MOE guidelines. We were obliged to advertise the opportunities for appointment to the SPC and during this time, several other well-qualified agricultural candidates chose to apply directly.

As a result, our Selection Committee had one OFEC nominee as well as several independent candidates from whom to choose for the two agricultural positions. All were given serious consideration. Following a thorough screening and interview process which included the OFEC nominee, decisions were made trying to match the qualifications of the candidates against the requirements of the job. Our Selection Committee eventually named two well-respected farmers in our area neither of whom was the OFEC nominee.

That was unfortunate for supporters of the OFEC candidate, but it was fair, it was democratic and it was totally accountable. It was the considered decision of 27 experienced, municipally-appointed CA members representing municipalities from Lanark to Ottawa to Leeds-Grenville to Frontenac; that was the role given to this group by provincial legislation.

We take our responsibilities under the *Clean Water Act* very seriously. We were obliged to follow the MOE guidelines and regulations. We were obliged to provide appropriate public announcements about the selection opportunities, have respect for geographic representation across the watersheds and to have regard for the OFEC self-nomination process, all of which we did. Senior officials of the OLA have been invited to address our Board of Directors to discuss their concerns but they declined to participate.

After all is said and done, we are very proud of the results of our search for the best possible SPC members. We look forward to getting on with the work of protecting municipal drinking water sources in the Mississippi and Rideau watersheds.

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