

Brian Masse

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May 18, 2021

The Honorable Omar Alghabra, P.C., M. P.
Minister of Transport
Transport Canada
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0N5

The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M. P.
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
180 Kent Street
Suite 1100
Ottawa, ON, K1P 0B6

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M. P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Alghabra, McKenna, and Wilkinson,

I am writing to you all again regarding the long-term protection of the environmentally sensitive land referred to as Ojibway Shores. I have spoken to each of you about this issue in the past and provided documentation and correspondence.

Ojibway Shores is a vital 33-acre greenspace and the last remaining, undeveloped natural shoreline in Windsor-Detroit. It is home to hundreds of endangered species that rely on migration through surrounding local parks for survival. This includes Ojibway Park, Spring Garden Natural Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, and the Tallgrass Prairie Park, to name a few. If connected, this area including the Detroit River could become one of North America's treasures. It serves not only as a home and larger ecosystem to these species, but also provides mitigation of flooding due to climate change and natural heritage areas that our community can enjoy, appreciate, and use for healthy living space and ecotourism.

Over the past two years a consensus has developed among residents and local, national, and international environmental organizations for all these publicly owned properties, parks, and preserves be combined into a National Urban Park. All local

municipal, provincial, and federal officials have committed to this and even the Prime Minister has publicly voiced his support in establishing Ojibway National Urban Park.

Ojibway Shores is a federal property currently under the management of the Windsor Port Authority (WPA) which has demanded that local taxpayers pay for this property which is already owned by all Canadians. I have always maintained that this is unacceptable for the federal government to make local residents pay twice for something they already own to preserve the environment. Instead the senior level of government should seize the opportunity to combat climate change, protect endangered species and help municipalities with a simple direct action.

As I have outlined in several letters to the previous Environment Minister, Transport Ministers, and the Prime Minister and to the WPA that the Government of Canada can transfer the management of this property from under the WPA to Environment Canada. All it will take is a change in the *letters patent* of the WPA. Making changes in a port's *letters patent* is a routine procedure as I have illustrated in examples presented to the WPA and to various Ministers.

Unfortunately, as reported in the media, the three years long negotiations between the City of Windsor and the WPA have broken down with the WPA at this late date informing the city that the waterfront land (the Dorion property) the City was attempting to acquire as part of a land swap is unacceptable to them. This has precipitated the American owner to sell the undeveloped waterfront land to a developer which puts the shoreline at further risk. This has led to the conclusion that the WPA has no intent of allowing Ojibway Shores to be protected and your department must now intervene in transferring Ojibway Shores from the WPA to Environment Canada so the process of establishing a National Urban Park can begin. Furthermore, the government should intervene and acquire the Dorion property to ensure the shoreline is protected and eliminate the flood risk to the historic Sandwich town community, which is one of the oldest settlements in Ontario and includes many centuries old buildings including the Duff-Baby House, built in 1798, which is located across the street from the land and is presently a museum as well as designated a National Historic Site of Canada.

As part of the federal government's efforts to assist municipalities adapt to climate change, intervening to transfer the Ojibway Shores from the WPA to Environment Canada would further this goal by allowing the City of Windsor to reallocate the resources that would have been used to pay for the land taxpayers already own to other environmental projects. On February 11, 2020 a federal grant of \$140,530, from the Transportation Assets Risk Assessment program was awarded to the WPA so it can conduct a climate change impact study and determine the extent of the potential crisis on the local port due to high water levels and intense storms. This is a federal acknowledgement of need for amelioration and mitigation that preserving Ojibway Shores would be a part of. Additionally, preserving Ojibway Shores would help to meet the government's commitment to have 25 percent of Canada's land have protected status by 2025. This would also follow the government's plan revealed in both the fall economic statement and the recent federal budget to create more National Urban Parks.

As stated in the Prime Minister's mandate letters to cabinet ministers, "people expect parliamentarians to work together to deliver these results," I am requesting that you take action to protect Ojibway Shores. It is your choice to take advantage of this opportunity

to achieve several of your government's goals while protecting local taxpayers and preserving the environment.

Thank you in advance for your time and immediate attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Masse". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Masse MP
Windsor West
NDP Innovation, Science and Economic Development Critic

Cc: Mayor Dilkens, City of Windsor