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November 14, 2022

Hon. Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, 777 Bay St
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Dear Hon. Steve Clark,

As you are aware, the Municipality of Tweed, along with several neighbouring municipalities, had experienced an EF2 Tornado on July 24, 2022. Our residents, property owners and local businesses were significantly impacted with damage to structures, property and our forests.

Ministry representatives had attended a site tour on August 2, 2022. We provided a detailed guided tour of various properties that were impacted over a 5-hour period. At the end of that tour, we were informed that the insurance adjuster for the Province would provide a report and it would be up to the Minister to make a decision as to whether our residents would be eligible for access to the Disaster Relief Assistance for Ontarians Program (DRAO).

Since then, we have not received any information back. The CAO/Treasurer has e-mailed and called, asking if the program was going to be opened. The only response that has been provided, is a repetition of the Program details such as it is up to the Minister and that it is only available to those without insurance and for their structures. Even after the CAO/Treasurer confirmed they were aware of the program's qualifications and process, still no direct answer has been provided.

Several residents have been regularly in contact with the Municipal Office asking if the DRAO program will be opened as they did not have insurance for their main farm buildings or insufficient insurance for principal dwellings. The only information we are able to tell them regularly is that the Province has not yet confirmed whether DRAO will be opened or not.

I am extremely disappointed in the lack of communication in relation to the response to whether the program will be opened. The staff and Municipality have not yet received a formal response. I feel that if this was a more highly populated area, such as a city or other metropolitan region, the response would not be as poor as we have experienced.

Our community has been negatively impacted and all interactions with the Province are being faced with what seems like a genuine lack of caring. The area is not safe. There are several hundreds of acres of forests that have been laid flat creating a fire hazard for the area. We know that the forests are not covered under the DRAO, however, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry's comments reminding hunters to be safe at this time of year appears highly inappropriate.

Not one forest in the affected areas is safe for anyone to be walking through. Many of these trees in the commonly hunted areas have several large limbs and branches broken off and are hung up, also known as 'widow-makers'. The tornado has created more of these. Making statements about encouraging safe hunting in the forests and not even referencing the significant impacts the recent weather events this year across the province creating these increased risks shows a lack of concern for the rural residents of Hastings County.

I ask that the Ministry provide a response as to whether or not DRAO will be opened. A formal response is requested due to the lack of communication. We also hope that for future weather events that create significant impacts on residents, regardless of whether they are part of an urban or rural area, will not have to wait more than 4 months to receive formal notice as to whether residents may be eligible for the DRAO program.

Sincerely,



Jo-Anne Albert
Mayor

CC. Premier Doug Ford
Hon. Graydon Smith
MPP Ric Bresee