

WATERSHED DEBACLE INQUIRY

Candidate Post Meeting Accountability Report

Formal notice and request for written candidate positions following the September 21, 2026 Meet the Candidates meeting

Date	September 26, 2026
Meeting	Meet the Candidates, Coldwater Legion Hall, Monday, September 21, 2026 at 18:30 hours
To	All Severn municipal candidates; current Council; responsible municipal and County officials; Severn landowners and taxpayers; interested community and professional organizations
From	John Tait, Lead Landowner Representative, Watershed Debacle Inquiry
Contact	WatershedDebacle.ca info.watersheddebacle@gmail.com
Record code	EVI - Candidate accountability and evidence preservation

NOTICE TO ALL SEVERN CANDIDATES

The Inquiry requests a short written position by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2026. Candidates are not being asked to admit liability or decide a lawsuit. They are being asked whether they support proper notice, preservation and disclosure of records, independent assessment of private loss, and a fair compensation inquiry.

LANDOWNER SUPPORT - OR GO HOME

This report distinguishes documented public records, attributed recollections, reasonable inferences, disputed allegations and questions requiring independent verification. It is not a court judgment.

1 Purpose and principal conclusion

The September 21 meeting gave residents an opportunity to observe the people seeking responsibility for Severn Township's next term of government. It did not provide answers to the previously circulated Watershed Debacle evidence.

According to the Inquiry's notification records, candidates had been advised of the landowner concerns before the meeting. Nevertheless, no candidate publicly addressed the Watershed Debacle, the Green Blanket Effect, potential private-property losses, compensation, MacLean Lake waterfront controls, Mission Creep, Tea Lake or the Cumberland Quarry compensation issues.

The principal conclusion is limited but important: the issues were not addressed, and the reason for that collective silence remains unknown. The Inquiry presently has no evidence proving that Council, the organizers or any other person instructed candidates to avoid the subjects.

Candidates were provided advance Watershed Debacle material according to the Inquiry's notification records.	Whether every candidate read and understood the complete material.
No candidate publicly addressed the Watershed Debacle at the September 21 meeting.	Why the issue was not raised and whether anyone discouraged its discussion.
The Inquiry's evidence package was not presented or examined during the meeting.	Whether questions were submitted, screened, shortened or rejected.
Councillor Janssen reportedly acknowledged reading the package and not explaining it to landowners.	What action, if any, followed his review and whether he disputes the account.
Only limited landowner responses were received following earlier outreach.	Whether affected owners understood the possible consequences for their own parcels.

2 Post meeting public record

The meeting devoted attention to immediate municipal complaints, including speeding and noisy heavy trucks, roadside brush and ditch maintenance. Those matters are legitimate. They do not replace questions concerning government-created restrictions that may affect the permitted use, market value, taxation and future of private land.

- No candidate presented a position concerning the Inquiry's findings.
- The documentary work completed by the Inquiry was not presented or examined.
- No candidate explained what action they would take to obtain answers for affected landowners.
- No candidate identified a process for independently examining property-value loss or compensation.
- No candidate explained why landowners were not directly and individually notified.

For accuracy, the Inquiry records the meeting result as follows:

"NO PUBLIC POSITION ON THE WATERSHED DEBACLE WAS STATED BY ANY CANDIDATE AT THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2026 MEET THE CANDIDATES MEETING."

Silence is not, by itself, proof of opposition, negligence, dishonesty or wrongdoing. It means that no public commitment, explanation or plan of action was provided.

3 Watershed affiliated subjects not addressed

3.1 Watershed Debacle and Green Blanket Effect

No candidate explained what they understood about the Inquiry evidence, how many private parcels may be affected, what direct notice was given, or what will be done about potential losses in use and value.

3.2 MacLean Lake and other waterfront controls

No candidate addressed the reported development or expansion of controls affecting MacLean Lake waterfront and backlot properties or other lakes identified in the Inquiry materials.

- What controls are being considered or implemented?
- Which lakes and individual parcels may be affected?
- What scientific and legal authority supports the controls?
- Were parcel-specific impacts investigated?
- When and how were affected owners notified?
- Were market-value and permitted-use consequences examined?

3.3 Mission Creep

No candidate addressed whether programs originally described as monitoring, advisory or protective initiatives have expanded into increasingly restrictive forms of private land-use control.

- What was the original mandate and how has it changed?
- Who authorized and financed each expansion?
- What safeguards prevent advisory environmental work from becoming unaccountable land-use control?
- What notice, appeal and correction process exists for affected owners?

3.4 Tea Lake

No candidate addressed the Tea Lake matter or explained its relationship to broader concerns involving environmental authority, waterfront controls, notice and municipal accountability. The Inquiry requests a written description of the action involved, the authority relied upon, the owners affected, the consultation provided and the private-property consequences.

3.5 Cumberland Quarry

No candidate provided a landowner-focused update concerning the proposed Cumberland Quarry or addressed the apparent tension between restrictions placed on environmentally protected private property and proposed aggregate development on lands described as Greenlands or environmentally protected.

- Were all potentially affected landowners properly notified?
- Why did some residents report not receiving the original notice?
- Are the groundwater, well, wetland and nearby-lake studies current?
- Were cumulative effects from existing and proposed operations assessed?
- Were property-value and permitted-use losses independently examined?
- Where is the compensation analysis for neighbouring owners?

4 Councillor Mark Taylor and institutional continuity

Official Township records state that Ward 1 Councillor Mark Taylor has represented Ward 1 since 1999 and is serving his sixth term. Official 2026 SSEA records identify him as Severn's representative and an Executive Committee member. Councillor Taylor is not seeking re-election.

According to the Inquiry's notification records, Councillor Taylor was fully advised of the Watershed Debacle and related landowner concerns. His retirement does not eliminate the need for a complete institutional record.

- What information did Councillor Taylor receive, and on what dates?
- What action, referral or investigation followed?
- Was the information brought before Council, municipal staff or the SSEA Board?
- What information was communicated to affected landowners?

- What municipal and SSEA records have been preserved?
- Who will assume responsibility after Councillor Taylor leaves office?

The Inquiry alleges that affected taxpayers did not receive the requested warning or explanation after notice was provided. That alleged omission requires Councillor Taylor's answer. It is not characterized here as proven negligence or intentional concealment.

4.1 Mayor Burkett's public thanks and open door statement

John Tait recalls Mayor Mike Burkett publicly thanking Councillor Taylor for his service and assistance at the September 21 meeting. That expression of appreciation is not evidence of wrongdoing and will not be represented as such.

Mr. Tait also recalls Mayor Burkett describing an open-door approach to taxpayers. The Inquiry asks that representation be reconciled with its record of unanswered questions, unsuccessful attempts to obtain meaningful meetings, incomplete access to property-impact and compensation records, and the continued absence of direct landowner notice.

4.2 Reported airplane and Greenlands statement

At an earlier meeting (date to be confirmed), John Tait recalls Mayor Burkett saying, in substance, that "They" flew over the green trees and declared it Greenlands. Donna Tait and Clerk Alison Gray are recalled as present. Mr. Tait reports that sources recall the same terminology on at least one other occasion.

These accounts are not verified verbatim quotations. Mayor Burkett, Ms. Gray and other witnesses are invited to confirm, correct or dispute them. Relevant calendars, meeting notes, emails and planning records should be preserved.

- Was any aerial observation relied upon in explaining or applying the Greenlands designation?
- What scientific, planning and parcel-specific evidence supported the designation?
- Who reviewed that evidence before communicating with the landowners?

4.3 Neutral-notice refusal: Mayor and Clerk

John Tait reports that an email denied his request for municipal assistance with neutral landowner notice. He attributes the refusal to Mayor Mike Burkett and Clerk Alison Gray. The original email, author, decision-maker and reasons remain to be confirmed.

NOTICE TO ALL SEVERN CANDIDATES

Do you support the refusal, reported by John Tait, to assist with a neutral notice inviting landowners to review the Watershed Debacle findings?

Please review the original email, then answer:

[] YES [] NO [] NEED TO REVIEW EMAIL

If YES: Explain your reasons and identify any authority relied upon.

If NO: Will you support reconsideration? State your action and deadline.

If information is missing: Identify it and give a date for your answer.

A neutral notice can identify disputed claims, make participation voluntary and include the Township's response. Supporting notice does not require endorsing the allegations.

4.4 Notice to candidates in other municipalities

NOTICE TO BARRIE, ORILLIA AND SIMCOE COUNTY MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

Will you support neutral notice so landowners in your municipality can review the Watershed Debacle findings, official responses and potential implications for their own properties?

These are common-sense questions about fair process and public accountability: What was done? Under what authority? Who was notified? What evidence supports the decision? Residents should be able to obtain clear answers.

Give your position, reasons and proposed action. If you cannot yet answer, identify the missing information and the date you will respond. Unexplained silence leaves the question unanswered and provides no recorded commitment to landowner notification.

Please advise residents to consult **WatershedDebacle.ca** for public evidence, official responses, corrections and potential-litigation updates.

Record basis: John Tait's account and the Inquiry's Denied Neutral Notice and Delayed Discovery issue (August 27, 2026), which records a reported January 27, 2026 refusal requiring confirmation from the original correspondence.

5 Councillor Dan Janssen

5.1 Delivery of the information package

John and Donna Tait state that they personally delivered an information package prepared for municipal candidates to Councillor Dan Janssen in the parking area at the Township's Hurlwood Lane offices. They recall Councillor Janssen appearing surprised and stating that he had not previously been informed of the potential lawsuit or the extent of the landowner issues. Councillor Janssen is invited to confirm, correct or clarify that account.

If confirmed, the account would raise a serious internal-circulation question. It would not, by itself, establish that Mayor Burkett, Councillor Taylor, Clerk Alison Gray or anyone else intentionally concealed information.

5.2 Recess exchange on September 21

During a recess, Mr. Tait approached Councillor Janssen, who is seeking election as Deputy Mayor. According to Mr. Tait's recollection, Councillor Janssen confirmed that he remembered John and Donna Tait and the earlier package.

Mr. Tait asked, "What did you do with the information package?" Councillor Janssen reportedly answered, "Well, I read it." Mr. Tait then asked, "Did you explain it to the landowners?" Councillor Janssen reportedly answered, "No, I didn't do that."

Councillor Janssen is invited to confirm, correct or provide context for the exchange.

5.3 John Tait's conduct and apology

Following the answer, Mr. Tait became disgusted and used a profane personal insult. Councillor Janssen responded that the remark was unprofessional. Mr. Tait agrees.

The insult was inappropriate and is withdrawn. Mr. Tait accepts responsibility and apologizes for his language. That apology does not withdraw the underlying questions, and the outburst should not be used to avoid answering them.

5.4 Public accountability questions for Councillor Janssen

- Why were landowners not warned or informed after the package was read?
- Was the information brought before Council?
- Were the Mayor, Clerk, planning staff or SSEA representatives asked for an explanation?
- Were preservation or disclosure of records requested?
- Were the alleged property-value and permitted-use consequences investigated?
- Were fellow councillors or municipal candidates advised?
- What will Councillor Janssen do differently if elected Deputy Mayor?

Before any podium statement is described as false, misleading or dishonest, its exact wording should be obtained from a recording, transcript or reliable notes and compared fairly with the reported recess exchange. No final finding of dishonesty is made in this report.

5.5 Aviation and workplace safety biography review

Informal airport inquiries confirmed that Councillor Janssen worked below the wing, including loading and servicing aircraft. That description is consistent with his own public account.

The public record also identifies him as an IAMAW District 140 general chairperson. In 2024 testimony before a House of Commons committee, he described himself as a 24-year Air Canada employee, a former co-leader of the Toronto Airport Workers' Council, a co-founder of the Toronto Pearson Worker Health and Safety Forum, and a recipient of a Greater Toronto Airports Authority Eye on Safety award.

The Inquiry therefore has no proper basis to allege that he fabricated his aviation, union or workplace-safety experience. Anonymous descriptions such as "smooth talker" are subjective and are excluded.

A narrower clarification remains appropriate. The Inquiry has not located evidence that Councillor Janssen served as a government aviation regulator, Transport Canada inspector, corporate safety manager or person possessing statutory enforcement authority. If the phrase "safety oversight" was used, he is asked to define the title, duties and authority intended.

His legitimate labour experience does not answer the municipal question: after reading the landowner material, what did he do to inform, protect or represent Severn landowners?

6 Core issues requiring written candidate positions

6.1 Landowner notification

Why were potentially affected owners not given direct, understandable notice of watershed, Greenlands, natural-heritage and related restrictions affecting their properties?

6.2 Property-value loss

What investigation examined effects on market value, highest and best use, financing, insurance and saleability? Who calculated any loss, using what methodology, and where are the reports? The Inquiry materials identify potential losses exceeding \$100,000 on some properties as an allegation requiring independent appraisal, not as a proven universal minimum.

6.3 Independent AACI assessment

Will candidates support an independent assessment led by an Accredited Appraiser Canadian Institute professional, capable of separating normal market movement from overlay damage and other property-specific causes?

6.4 Compensation and fairness

Has Severn identified any compensation process? If officials say none is available, what precise statute, bylaw or legal authority supports that position? Section 20 of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 demonstrates that Ontario can enact express limitation-of-liability language. That statute does not govern Severn and is raised only as a comparison. No equivalent Severn-specific provision has been identified in the materials reviewed.

6.5 SSEA and waterfront controls

What authority, evidence and parcel-specific investigation support additional waterfront and backlot controls, and were owners advised before they were developed or advanced?

6.6 Freedom of information and the missing record

What records exist concerning individualized property impacts, compensation, highest and best use, notice, mapping methodology and instructions to staff or consultants? A no-records response raises the further question of whether consequences were ever investigated.

6.7 Tax fairness and MPAC

If government decisions reduced usable or marketable potential, when was MPAC notified and were assessments adjusted?

6.8 Evidence preservation

All relevant emails, maps, data, notes, instructions, consultant communications and electronic records must be preserved, including records involving departing staff and elected officials.

6.9 Candidate accountability

Candidates are not being asked to determine liability. They are being asked whether they support notice, disclosure, preservation, independent loss assessment, a fair compensation inquiry and respectful engagement.

7 Questions for meeting organizers

- Were questions concerning these subjects submitted to the organizers or moderator?
- If submitted, were they provided to the candidates?
- Were any watershed-related questions screened out, shortened or rejected?
- What criteria governed the questions selected?
- Did anyone advise candidates not to discuss the Watershed Debacle or related matters?
- Will the organizers preserve and disclose submitted questions, moderator notes and the complete meeting recording?

The absence of the subjects from the meeting is documented. The reason for their absence is not yet established.

8 Candidate response form

Please complete this form or provide an equivalent written response. Explanations and supporting records may be attached. Responses will be reproduced fairly and without embellishment.

1	Do you support direct notification to potentially affected Severn landowners?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
2	Do you support disclosure and preservation of the complete municipal record?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
3	Do you support an independent AACI-led assessment of property-value losses?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
4	Do you support a fair compensation inquiry where measurable private loss may have resulted from government decisions?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
5	Do you support Cumberland Quarry landowners receiving proper notice, current evidence and complete answers?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
6	Will you seek written clarification of the MacLean Lake, Tea Lake and other waterfront-control initiatives?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
7	Will you require Council to identify which body authorized, financed and implemented the Greenlands and watershed controls?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
8	Will you advise residents to consult WatershedDebate.ca for continuing public evidence and potential-litigation updates?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
9	Did anyone advise or request that you not discuss the Watershed Debacle at the September 21 meeting?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE
10	Will you permit your written position to be reproduced accurately in the Taxpayer H.R. Assessment?	☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NEED MORE EVIDENCE

Candidate	_____
Office sought	_____
Signature	_____
Date	_____

Comments	

9 Candidate response and Taxpayer H R Assessment

Candidates providing clear written support will receive fair recognition. Candidates who request evidence, ask responsible questions or propose constructive solutions will have that engagement accurately recorded.

Where a properly notified candidate does not respond, the public record will state:

"NO WRITTEN POSITION OR LANDOWNER SUPPORT RECEIVED AS OF THE PUBLICATION DATE."

A non-response will not, by itself, be reported as proof of dishonesty, opposition, negligence or wrongdoing. It will receive no positive landowner-support recognition because no written support was provided.

RESPONSE DEADLINE

**Written responses are requested by 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, September 30, 2026.
Send to info.watersheddebacle@gmail.com.**

10 Public and legal advisory

This report contains documentary findings, reported statements, attributed recollections, disputed allegations, reasonable inferences and questions requiring answers. It is not a court judgment and must not be presented as one.

No individual should be declared dishonest, corrupt, negligent or personally liable without sufficient admissible evidence and proper legal process. Credible corrections, contrary evidence and written explanations are invited and will be reviewed fairly.

Nothing in this report constitutes legal, environmental, engineering, appraisal or other professional advice. Affected owners should obtain independent advice concerning their individual circumstances, property rights and applicable limitation periods.

The purpose is accountability, evidence preservation and landowner protection - not personal attack.

11 Source and attribution note

- Township of Severn Council and member records: [Council page](#) and [member records](#).
- Severn Sound Environmental Association records included in the Township of Severn Council agenda of June 3, 2026, identifying Councillor Mark Taylor as Severn's Executive Member.
- House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Meeting 124 evidence, September 24, 2024: [committee evidence](#).
- OrilliaMatters candidate-submitted profile for Dan Janssen, September 7, 2026: [candidate profile](#).
- Township of Severn official certified candidate list, August 24, 2026: [official list](#).
- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, including current section 20 limitation-of-liability provisions: [Ontario statute](#).
- Firsthand meeting and conversation accounts are attributed to John and Donna Tait and remain open to confirmation, correction or dispute by the other participants.

12 Final notice

Landowners should not have to pay repeatedly to discover what government placed on their properties, who authorized it, what evidence supported it, what losses were anticipated, why they were not notified, who benefited and who is responsible for correcting the damage.

The next Council will inherit these questions. New candidates now have an opportunity to demonstrate that they will not inherit the silence.

**SUPPORT PROPER NOTICE.
SUPPORT INDEPENDENT EVIDENCE.
SUPPORT FAIR COMPENSATION REVIEW.**

John Tait
Lead Landowner Representative
Watershed Debacle Inquiry
WatershedDebacle.ca
info.watersheddebacle@gmail.com

NOTICE TO CANDIDATES - LANDOWNERS EXPECT ANSWERS

Candidates who receive our Taxpayer H.R. questions and provide neither a completed form nor an equivalent written response by **5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2026** will be recorded as **"No written response received."**

Landowners can judge that record when deciding whom to support. If you seek to represent them, answer their questions, explain your position and state what action you will take.

Our inquiry's research should be judged by its supporting documents, accuracy and openness to correction. We welcome answers supported by evidence.

STAND WITH LANDOWNERS - OR GO HOME.