

INCREMENTAL SOCIALISM?

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PRIVATE LAND OR PUBLIC RESOURCE

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Many sectors of the Ontario economy rely on availability of land, preferably land with a minimum of statutory encumbrances on title. It is those encumbrances and the public agencies where they germinate that too often escape vigilant attention of affected citizens. Generally speaking, private ownership of land comes down to whether governments control people or people control governments. The former option has been an unwelcome reality in Ontario and across Canada for the past 40 years. Moreover, its nowhere better illustrated than in those occurrences where extortion by statute is excused in the name of environmental cleansing or, that failing, “the public good”

The following overview summarizes how Ontario governments of every political persuasion, have come to control people through regulatory over-kill that transforms private property into a public benefit without paying for it.

In the first half of the last century, Karl Marx repeatedly confirmed that communism meant “the abolition of private property”. During the 1920s and 30s, his successor, the homicidal Joseph Stalin, nationalized Russian agriculture by eliminating 25 million small landowners via starvation, forced labor and the firing squad. The second half of that tumultuous century saw the victors of World War II, including Russia, establish the United Nations (U.N.) as an international guarantor of peace on earth. However, as more Third World countries with inherent social and economic problems became U.N. members, enforcement of world peace as the central purpose of that world body descended into hollow rhetoric marked by hesitant action and mediocre results.

In the resulting vacuum, numerous global issues that allegedly require international attention were introduced by an ever-expanding U.N. bureaucracy intent on its own survival. Many suggested targets were, and still are, legitimate and their proposed management commendable and overdue. Others are perhaps less so. Still others produce widespread controversy, as is the case with U.N. protocols that induce senior governments to trade national and regional sovereignty for claimed ecological benefit, often at the expense of private land ownership. For example, at Vancouver in 1976 a U.N. policy statement declared that ownership of land by private citizens is a major factor in the accumulation of wealth and thus contributes to social injustice. You can look it up!

That statement, where the ghosts of Marx and Stalin obviously reside, is the defining principle behind U.N.-inspired land use dictates. With world attention focused on environmental issues, a circumstance useful to the spread of doomsday misinformation by government agencies, it is also the philosophical core of the following sequence of events:

- 1978 — the Ontario government transfers the entire Niagara Escarpment to provincial control, a seizure the then-current provincial Treasurer described as proof that regulating private land for public benefit would in future be more convenient and a lot cheaper than buying it.
- 1982 — after extensive debate, Canada's federal government proclaims the Charter of Rights and Freedoms where the right to own property does NOT appear as was promised by the then-current administration as well as by Pierre Trudeau of the preceding regime.
- 1983 — Ontario's MNR publishes a policy manual listing pre-selected categories of private property, such as Forest Lands, Areas of Natural & Scientific Interest, Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands, that could be designated for future regulation without compensation.
- 1989 — Ontario government officials hold closed meetings with municipal councils to advise that local land use planning will henceforth be rigorously monitored against "natural heritage" standards as ordained in future versions of the Planning Act and Municipal Act.
- * 1990 — without public consultation or debate, the Niagara Escarpment and part of the Lake Erie shoreline is designated U.N. Biosphere Reserves but MNR and the Niagara Escarpment Commission later claim neither agency was aware of, or involved in, that initiative
- 1992 — at the U.N. Earth Summit organized by Maurice Strong in Rio de Janeiro, Canada signs the Convention for Biological Diversity, an international treaty under Agenda 21 (for 21' century) that binds signatory nations to U.N. standards in land and species legislation.
- * 1993 - under the influence of Maurice Strong, the U.N. had become a massive, multi-tasked organization more dedicated to world governance than to world peace. That Mr. Strong, a multi-millionaire Canadian, has been questioned in U.S. courts about environmental profiteering and stock manipulation and, more recently, was reported to be a beneficiary of the Iraqi/U.N. oil-for-food scandal is now seldom mentioned. Meanwhile, by 1993 the Ontario government, regardless of political persuasion, was home to powerful bureaucrats who were inventing provincial statutes that convert more and more private land to state control. In many instances these protocols are aided and abetted by U.N.-sponsored Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The game plan is environmental protection to maximize public support, the chosen strategy is new or revised editions and interpretations of the Planning Act and the Municipal Act to compel matching changes in municipal Official Plans and the favorite tactic is "partial takings" to avoid compensation as required under the provincial Expropriation Act. Troubled by the fall-out between democratic traditions versus socialistic tinkering that was, and is, affecting private ownership of land in Ontario, representatives of several established advocacy groups began discussing a united landowner federation to publicize and protest that trend
- 1994 — the Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance (OPERA) under a shared mandate "to protect, and entrench in law, landowner rights and responsibilities" is launched at Trent University in Peterborough by citizen organizations, trade associations and private individuals.

- 1995 — a written Mike Harris promise to rescind the provincial “natural heritage” Bill 163 in event of a future Conservative election victory was later evaded by so-called modification rather than outright cancellation of that command-and-control legislation.
- 1996 — the Ontario government donates \$ 600,000.00 to The Nature Conservancy, a U.N.- endorsed NGO, to help MNR record Ontario land designated, without prior knowledge or consent of affected private landowners, as habitat for alleged species at risk.
- 2000 — the Canadian Senate is persuaded to insert pro-landowner codicils in a new Species at Risk Act, which is nevertheless ratified unchanged as a federal statute restricting, without appeal or compensation, human use of private land to benefit species at risk.
- 2001 — Escarpment Plan Review hearings accept U.N. Biosphere Reserve labeling (later changed to “World” Biosphere) as well as retroactive Visual Landscape rules and “public body status” for five environmental NGOs thus further diluting municipal land planning on the Escarpment.
- 2002 - Ontario municipalities are privately advised that MNR intends to exempt from municipal property taxes all lands adjacent to “designated” areas in Ontario owned by private conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy.
- 2003 — the Ontario government releases a Panel Report on the Role of Government, a 30 year projection of social and economic shifts expected (or planned) to expand large urban centers while shrinking rural ones thus intensifying state control of developable land.
- 2004 — MNR “adjusts” the Conservation Authorities Act to broaden the mandate and strengthen the clout of Ontario’s 36 district Conservation Authorities while down-loading to local municipalities (read local taxpayers) all costs attendant on tighter control of private land.
- 2004 – the Ivey Foundation funds a covert confederacy of 5 professional lobbyists – David Suzuki Foundation, Eco-Justice, Environmental Defense, Ontario Nature and Canadian Wilderness Society – to compose what will be later attributed to MNR as Ontario’s new Species at Risk Act.
- 2005 – the Ontario Greenbelt Act sterilizes development on almost 2 million acres of land, much of it privately owned, and this vast holding is to be shared, in common with the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine, similar restrictions for adjacent areas of “protected countryside” and “species corridors”.
- 2006 – the MNR announces “strengthening” of existing provincial Species at Risk Act (as previously composed by 5 NGOs) to meet or exceed regulations in the 2001 federal statute of the same name and assigning joint enforcement of both statutes in Ontario by freshly empowered Conservation Authorities.
- 2007 — structural comparison of government panels studying Greenbelt and Species at Risk Acts indicates delegates from four U.N.-approved NGOs but only one from a landowner group are named there and one Committee reviews only GTA homebuilder concerns.

- 2007 — on June 22 the co-chief of Research in Motion (RIM) donates \$10 million to the Centre of International Governance Innovation, a vehicle to encourage global governance at the University of Waterloo.
- 2008 – Mutually concerned about public control of private property by regulation without compensation, diverse landowner-oriented organizations began discussing a “coalition of coalitions” to counter balance the combined voice and influence of NGO cartels in formation of provincial land use statutes.
- 2009 - Food Chain, Halton Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Landowners Association, Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance and Peel Federation of Agriculture together launched the Land Use Council(LUC) with a mandate to monitor/publish consequences of land control legislation in Ontario.
- 2010 – Without pause or compromise in their individual activities, LUC’s 5 founding members this year authorized collective comment with respect to the Greenbelt, Species at Risk and Source Water Protection Acts, approved links to media and municipal databases and initiated extensive land use research.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS:

In 2005 the MMAH appointed a Greenbelt Foundation to administer the MMAH Greenbelt Act. The Foundation consisted of eight members, a mediation lawyer, a tourism consultant, a winery executive, a full time farmer, a land use planner, a natural heritage lobbyist, a U.N.-related NGO (Environmental Defense) executive and an environmental public policy consultant.

In 2006 the MNR appointed an Advisory Panel to review proposed Species at Risk legislation (as written 18 months previously by 5 NGOs). The Panel consisted of nine members, three academics, three environmental lobbyists, two environmental consultants and one aboriginal delegate. Private citizens directly affected by the legislation under review were not represented. The Panel issued a Report that fully endorsed all MNR proposals, a finding supported by a claimed preponderance of favorable written submissions among a total of 108 received from unnamed respondents.

In 2007 MNR appointed a Conservation Authorities Liaison Committee to review MNR Species at Risk legislation with the GTA home building industry. The Committee consisted a Conservation Ontario manager, four Conservation Authority representatives, four GTA developer/home building appointees, two U.N.-endorsed NGO (Environmental Defense and Sierra Club) executives, two municipal delegates and one bureaucrat from each of four provincial Ministries. Whether some exemptions to the Species at Risk Act as may be recommended by this Committee will someday apply as well to developers and home builders outside the GTA and to commercial and agricultural sectors across Ontario is an open question at this time.

In June, 2007 the KW Record described the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) as a non-partisan, non-profit Foundation established at the University of Waterloo with start-up funding of \$30 million from two RIM majority shareholders supplemented by a \$30 million federal grant from the then-current Liberal government. CIGI claims to build ideas for global governance by providing research funding, creating partnerships and shaping dialogue among scholars, opinion leaders and policy makers. Whether this will convert participating students into global governance zealots remains to be seen. Whether the voting public gets to vote on global governance before it becomes a Big Brother reality is also unknown. Perhaps prevailing CIGI aims and opinions on these issues will be made clear by its five appointed “Fellows”, two of whom, not surprisingly, are Ms. Louise Frechette, former U.N. deputy Secretary General and Mr. Paul Heinbecker, former Canadian Ambassador to the U.N.

These facts characterize international pressures, national legislation and provincial land use manipulations to which various organizations, including LUC and/or one or more of its member groups, have made extensive comment, delivered oral and written submissions and circulated relevant research material by Internet e-mail and web page. Their content, direction and sequence point to a connection between the U.N. with its stable of militant NGOs on the one hand and increasing Ontario government control of private lives and property in the guise of environmental necessity on the other. Whether that connection constitutes an important step on the road to global governance without knowledge or consent of the governed is an open question. In that context it's significant the Alaska state government several years ago approved a Resolution in which U.N. designations of land such as Biosphere Reserves are hereafter prohibited in that jurisdiction. One wonders when federal and regional politicians in Canada might do the same!

Without defined land ownership rights unelected global, national and regional bureaucracies will no doubt continue to invent regulations that inhibit use and value of private property they don't own and won't buy. Although merchandised in the guise of “biological diversity” or “environmental necessity” or “the public good”, these decrees more often than not lack properly balanced public review, ignore due process and violate natural justice. They have spawned growing public resentment and, in recent years, have finally encouraged provincial and federal politicians in Canada to introduce private members' bills for property rights. Indeed, however peaceful their long sleep in socialistic heaven, Marx and Stalin would be appalled to know the current Russian regime has enacted property rights in that country and the Chinese communist government is said to be moving in the same direction.

Most thinking Canadians are dedicated environmentalists who fully endorse reasonable measures to protect our global biology and conserve our global resources. However, those worthwhile goals are now tainted by a horde of doomsday prophets whose strident sermonizing, not to mention personal fortunes, in the hugely profitable environmental cult seem often associated with junk science, context manipulation, unproven allegations and outright lies. Moreover, their implicit preference for more regulation correlates to the specter of total U.N. control of all land on Planet Earth. Against that unsettling hypothesis, the Ontario electorate at large should demand constitutional ownership rights. In addition, until that overdue protocol is enacted, Ontario landowners should insist on some form of capital compensation based on current market value whenever a government agency arbitrarily imposes

additional restrictions on their property.