

# Bill Walker MPP

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## Media Release:

**March 18th, 2016**

### **Letter to the Editor**

Dear Editor,

Many landowners are calling and e-mailing their local MPPs in fear that the trail on their land would turn into an easement because of rumours and speculation they have heard about Bill 100.

I am writing to clarify these points.

Bill 100, also known as the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, will not create unwanted or automatic easements and will not take away any property rights.

So, the key points I want to reiterate are:

1. This is all voluntary. No property owner will be compelled to provide an easement unless they agree to do so.
2. Your rights to your land will not be impacted if you do not sign to allow an easement.
3. Promoting the use of trails is good for tourism. If neighbours begin rescinding permission from here on, then trail use looks grim for the future, as does the future of snowmobile and ATV clubs in our region, decreasing tourism activity and hurting the local economy. Simply put, without access to trails the sector collapses.

Regrettably, I have heard of some property owners revoking the use of their land as a result of some of the misinformation that has been communicated about this piece of legislation. It is my understanding the Bill has been reviewed and Ok'd by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC). They share the concern that if many of the people who have made their property available in past relinquish access that the negative consequence will severely impact the entire sector. Bill 100 has also been endorsed as a good piece of legislation by my colleague, MPP Randy Hillier, who is a past President of the Landowner's Association, and in fact he has written a number of articles for publication in such resources as the Ontario Farmer in an effort to clarify the Legislation and in support of the passing of Bill 100.

While my party and I support the general intent of Bill 100 to promote trail preservation and encourage local tourism, we have raised the concerns we heard from local constituents and stakeholder groups directly with Minister Michael Coteau. Specifically, we raised concerns related to Easements, and Transferability of Easements, and have asked the government to take additional time to consult with concerned stakeholders and consider potential amendments to ensure a viable bill that benefits all parties.

In response to our party's request, Minister Coteau has assured us the Legislation retains the voluntary agreement of a property owner to enter in to any agreement. It is also our understanding from the Minister that Bill 100, if passed, will not automatically convert existing land-use agreements a property owner has with a club/organization into an easement registered on title.

The Minister agreed to have his staff speak directly with any and all groups or individuals who wishes clearer understanding. I strongly encourage any constituents who need any further clarification to contact the Minister's liaison, Andrew Campbell by email at [andrew.campbell@ontario.ca](mailto:andrew.campbell@ontario.ca) for answers.

Again, as far as my party and I are concerned, we don't want to see any unnecessary interference from this government when it comes to trail agreements. The introduction of significant changes to fundamental property rights merits further study, and it's clear the consultation process with impacted parties was not adequate. As such, our Opposition Critic on this file (MPP Steve Clark) and my colleagues will continue to pursue further clarity to Bill 100 as required to ensure the Legislation is as effective as it was intended to be.

*Sincerely,*

*Bill Walker, MPP*

*Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound*