

**OFAH ZONE “H” report for BPSA  
Stu Paterson – March 2019**

**“opinions expressed in this report are  
not necessarily those of BPSA, its  
members or directors”**



1. Matt DeMille and Brian Mcrae of OFAH are among those leading the battle against federal firearms proposals they say “would do nothing to reduce firearms crime in Canada”. DeMille is the OFAH Manager of Fish and Wildlife Services. McRae is the OFAH Member & Club Services Director.

For a 3<sup>rd</sup> time both met on parliament hill with Minister Blair on the firearms issue. Blair is the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction who heads the federal study of new gun rules that if made into legislation “would penalize licensed firearms owners and do little to reduce gun crime” according to MP Larry Miller at the recent firearms meeting in Durham.



**OFAH HAS ISSUED A REPORT ON THEIR LATEST  
BLAIR MEETING:**

Filed by Matt De Mille OFAH head office:

We chatted with Minister Blair for about 45 minutes.

This was a follow-up to the roundtable discussion we participated in last October with a number of other groups, and a one-on-one sit-down meeting with the Minister in December. Many comments suggest these discussions are a lost cause, and they haven’t or won’t be effective in making a difference. In our minds, we can’t be upset about the outcome of firearms policy discussions unless we’ve done everything we can to influence it. In this discussion, we are not only representing our own firearm-owning members, we are also providing a voice for the members of our provincial and territorial federation affiliates across the country. This represents hundreds of thousands of firearms owners – hunters, trappers and sport shooters. The governing political party and the responsible Ministers can certainly play a role in firearms policy, but we have a responsibility to look beyond partisan politics and work within the system to



influence the greatest possible positive outcomes on behalf of law-abiding firearms owners. Waiting for an election, a change in government or cabinet shuffle without doing everything we can right now, will only leave the firearms community vulnerable to negative outcomes.

For those asking about details of the discussion, here are some highlights. The Minister offered an overview of what he's been hearing from across the country. Our discussions with the Minister have shown he is well aware of the concerns of law-abiding firearms owners, and this emphasizes the importance of our advocacy and that of others in the firearms community who continue to voice their opinions. If decisions are made that negatively affect us, it won't be because he isn't aware of our concerns. The Minister emphasized that he fully respects his mandate of "not impeding the lawful use of firearms by Canadians". We reiterated that a handgun and 'assault weapon' ban is not consistent with this mandate.



We had a lengthy discussion about the need for government action to have tangible enhancements to public safety. The Minister says his focus is on making enhancements to public safety and not to take action for the sake of taking action, and placing undue burden on law-abiding firearms owners. We definitely agree on the need for government actions to demonstrate enhancements for public safety, but we may disagree about what measures are required to enhance public safety (particularly when it comes to restrictions on law-abiding firearms owners) and what degree of effectiveness those actions will have.

The Minister also acknowledged the need for the Government of Canada to tackle the broader social determinants of gun violence and target the demand for illicit firearms. We agreed that further restrictions on the licensed firearms community are not going to solve the current demand for illicit firearms. There are things that need to be done to plug holes in our borders to keep illegal firearms out. We offered full support for actions taken to further crack down on cross-border smuggling and addressing the social determinants of gun violence.

You won't be surprised that the Minister believes domestically-sourced illicit firearms are a problem. Rather than debating the sources of statistics to support this assertion, we outlined the many ways government can take action on their target issues of straw purchasing and theft without further regulating law-abiding firearms owners using non-



regulatory measures like education and outreach. We focused on tangible and effective examples of messaging that would accomplish this, and the Minister recognized the value of this type of education and outreach. There is also a need to better coordinate use of existing tools between government, police agencies and retailers to identify suspicious purchasing activities.

The Minister also talked about the hundreds of thousands, or even millions of Canadians who are pushing to ban firearms, particularly handguns and 'assault weapons'.



This gave us an opportunity to talk about the need for the federal government to take a leadership role in positive communications about responsible firearms ownership. If the only thing that Canadians hear about firearms is negative, it is not surprising they are pushing for bans and restrictions. There is a lack of understanding among Canadians about responsible firearms ownership, and governments are doing very little to counteract the misinformation and even contributing to it in some cases. We can't have a constructive conversation about firearms policy without a proper understanding among Canadians about firearms ownership and use in Canada.

The Minister was very interested in our perspectives about the requirements for storage of firearms, for both retailers and individual firearm owners. Preventing theft seems to be the primary objective of his interest. He had obviously been talking to individual firearms owners while traveling the country and expressed recognition about how conscientious responsible firearms owners are with storage. Again, we highlighted the current requirements, the potential for stronger education and outreach, and our concerns around trying to further regulate storage. There are a wide diversity of situations and scenarios facing firearms owners making more restrictive storage requirements a challenge. Given the Minister's interest, we expect this conversation about storage to continue and it will be important for the firearms community have a strong voice.



We also stated our position that UN marking requirements is unnecessary in Canada, and our recommendations on Bill C-71 were brought up at many different points during the conversation.

The success of our advocacy effort can't be measured yet. It will be measured in the coming months when the government makes an official announcement on whether they are pursuing firearms bans or not. Until then we will continue our efforts to prevent unnecessary restrictions on law-abiding firearms owners.

For more information on what we've been saying on the handgun ban, Bill C-71, and UN marking, visit [www.ofah.org/firearms](http://www.ofah.org/firearms).

Anyone who wants to talk firearms policy and what the OFAH is doing to influence it, don't hesitate to contact OFAH head office and ask to speak to me Matt DeMille or Brian McRae. 1-800-263-6324.

2. There is GOOD NEWS from the province on the chronic wasting disease front. Since the discovery of chronic wasting disease in Quebec deer just north of Eastern Ontario, OFAH has been actively urging our Ontario government to step up testing here for this disease. Well the province did a fine job on the testing. OFAH head office welcomes the news that there are still no cases of this disease in our province. This is the latest report on results of deer testing south of us and in eastern Ontario:



#### [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:](#)

All samples tested in Ontario came back negative for chronic wasting disease! Thanks again to the hunters who participated in both of our surveillance zones: eastern Ontario, where 307 samples were tested, and southwestern Ontario, where 457 samples were tested.

Chronic wasting disease is a fatal brain disease affecting mostly white-tailed deer and elk. Since 2002, our science staff employees have tested over 12,400 samples, with no positive cases found in wild deer in Ontario. Our staff use a risk-based model to decide where to survey each year, which increases the chances of detecting this disease as early as possible. Test results can now be found online at [www.ontario.ca/cwd](http://www.ontario.ca/cwd). [#MNRScience](#)

**Background - The Quebec government reported on confirmed cases of CWD north of Eastern Ontario.**

Eleven (11) cases of CWD were confirmed by the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\)](#) on a farm in the Laurentides region. All the farm's animals were slaughtered by December 18, 2018.

(deer photo by Wyoming Game & Fish Dept. and Wyoming Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance)



OFAH worked closely with the province on the CWD file. The federation issued this advisory on how to tell if a deer you harvested has CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD):

#### **Infected animals become emaciated**

(thus the name wasting disease) and appear in very poor body condition. Clinical symptoms are typically not seen in deer younger than 18 months of age. CWD symptoms may also be characteristic of diseases other than CWD (e.g. deer with bacterial brain abscesses or Hemorrhagic Disease).

## What to do if you suspect a deer you harvested has CWD:

Animals infected with chronic wasting disease may exhibit:

- loss of body weight and body condition
- abnormal behaviour, such as indifference to human activity
- tremors, stumbling, lack of coordination or paralysis

If you see these signs in a wild animal, contact the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

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### Testing:

Last fall Southwest Ontario drop-off depots included locations in Mount Forest, Rockwood, and Waterloo. Locations were chosen based on known risk factors:

- deer population density
- presence of deer and elk farms
- habitat and land use
- winter deer feeding
- elk re-introductions



For more information on this program or to submit a sample, please call the MNRF wildlife health information line for rabies and chronic wasting disease at 1-888-574-6656.

The bottom line in March of 2019 is - ALL South western Ontario deer tested for CWD tested NEGATIVE.

### 3. POLLUTED WATER:

OFAH is closely watching what action if any, the Ontario government is taking on the issue of water pollution. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner Diane Saxe highlighted a failure by a long line of provincial governments to reduce the amount of man-made pollution entering Ontario's waters.

This was detailed in volume two of her four-volume Back to Basics, Environmental Protection Report covering the period from Apr. 1, 2017 to Mar. 31, 2018.

Saxe noted that, in the period covered, raw sewage overflowed into southern Ontario waters 1,327 times with the majority of those coming from 57 outdated municipal sewer systems that combine sewage with storm-water.



“Despite closed beaches and decades of concern, the government has still not required these municipalities to do everything reasonable to stop their overflows,” she said.

She also noted that the province’s standard for dumping industrial toxic waste into our waterways is 25 years old and outdated.

Another worrisome issue she identified was the uncertainty over the province continuing to fund the source water protection program, which was first introduced 18 years ago as a response to the Walkerton drinking water crisis. That program has identified and addressed hundreds of significant threats to municipal drinking water sources province-wide.

She said, “This is no time for the government to turn its back on source water protection.”

Saxe also expressed disbelief that farm runoff was still a major issue in Ontario.

#### 4. GREENBELT PROTECTIONS REMAIN: BILL 66



Pressure from OFAH and other conservation groups has caused the province to back off on controversial elements of Bill 66. This bill would have opened Ontario’s protected Greenbelt to development that could have by-passed established environmental safeguards. Read about this in Ontario Out of Doors magazine.

<https://oodmag.com/news/greenbelt-protections-remain-in-place-bill-66/>

#### 5. There’s a new Ontario wild turkey study under way. It is endorsed by OFAH. Check it out below:

Graduate student Jenn Baici at [Trent University](#) is collecting information that will allow her to estimate the size of Ontario’s reintroduced wild turkey population and design a reliable method to monitor population changes over time. In order to complete this project she needs your help! Jenn is kindly asking for the following three easy pieces of information:

1. The observation location (as specific as possible). Geographic co-ordinates (latitude/longitude) are most useful.

2. The number of wild turkeys that were observed.
  3. The date and time that the birds were observed.
- Observation date is essential, whereas observation time is preferred but nonessential.

Jenn invites you to submit your **\*\*complete\*\*** observations through multiple avenues

- Email Jenn directly at: [jenniferbaici@trentu.ca](mailto:jenniferbaici@trentu.ca)
  - Submit your observation via the online citizen science platforms [eBird](https://ebird.org) or [iNaturalist.org](https://inaturalist.org).
- Helpful step-by-step instructions about online record submission can be found at:

<https://wildturkeycount.wordpress.com>



6. Upcoming OFAH meetings include the annual March 14-16 in Mississauga, the April 21<sup>st</sup> zone H session in Orangeville and the June 7 meeting in Barrie. The location of the Zone H annual meeting September 28 remains TBA. The club hosting this annual meeting receives one thousand dollars for expenses and a 500-dollar donation from OFAH. I report on OFAH for BPSA nine times a year. I attend 5 OFAH meetings a year on behalf of BPSA.



***Stu Paterson reporting on OFAH for the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association***

Photo credits: OFAH, Wyoming Fish & Game Dept. Wyoming Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance, Paterson Media

**BPSA NOW CELEBRATING  
57 YEARS OF CONSERVATION**

