(MC)² Annual Meeting, November 1, 2026
Environment, Land Use and Outreach (ELO) Committee

The ELO committee was reconstituted in 2025. Initial discussions took place in late August and our first official committee meeting was held on Dec 2.

Our overarching purpose, as it is with MC² as a whole, is to ensure that the natural, agricultural and rural heritage of Headwaters Area are protected and preserved for future generations.

To this end, a primary focus is on advocating for Watershed Protection and promoting Land Use Planning that fulfills this duty.

In effect, we are Pro-Responsible Development. With very strong, evidence based views of the the definition of "responsible".

We also continue to advocate for safer and quieter rural roads, and enhanced community engagement on decisions that impact our natural and rural environment (such as paving gravel roads.)

Examples of progress in the first year:

1. In our **Outreach work** we have formed alliances with like minded organizations, sharing expertise and experience and supporting initiatives areas that are aligned with our purpose. For example;
   We are supporting the the Ontario Headwaters Institute in a their campaign to pressure the Ontario government to fulfill their obligations under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. This is a bi-national agreement between the United States and Canada—originally signed in 1972 that sets shared goals to restore and protect the water quality and ecosystem health of the rest of the Great Lakes basin.
   Under the agreement significant progress has been made in reducing pollution and improving the water quality of the Great lakes. However, the agreement covers the whole Great Lakes Basin, and this includes the Watersheds from the Headwaters to the Lakes. Action in this area, is lacking.
   As of 2010, Ontario had lost over 72% (just under 14,000 square kilometres) of our wetlands. In 2017 the Wetlands Conservation Strategy proposed to halt this loss by 2025 and reverse the trend by 2030. Since then, the government has quietly backed away from that commitment, and more recently has actually reduced wetland protections. This campaign continues with the support of 35 citizens organization from around the Great Lakes.

2. In our **Environment and Land Use** work we are continuing to support the Melancthon based Watershed Guardians in their opposition to the proposed Strada, below the water table, Quarry. The quarry is situated on what is classified as a "highly sensitive, rapid recharge area for an aquifer". If approved, this quarry will blast a 66 hectare by 70 meter deep hole in the aquifers that are the source of the Pine and Boyne rivers, and provide drinking water to Melancthon, Mulmur, Mono, Shelburne, and Orangeville.

3. On a smaller scale, in January, we made a presentation to the Mulmur council on the potential benefits of recycled aggregates. It is possible that recycled material could provide up to 25% of

Mulmur's aggregate. Reducing the need for virgin aggregate and prolonging the life of our gravel pit. At this time, recycled material has been used in two pilot projects.

Challenges:
We are not anticipating much Provincial support for our work. In reality, the provincial government is making rapid progress in the opposite direction. Significant government actions include;

- Ministerial Zoning Orders – the power to approve projects despite risks to the environment and endangered species and over the objections of local councils.
- Reduction in the protections for endangered species and sensitive watersheds and wetlands.
- Reduction of Conservation Authority scope and powers, etc., etc.

Our Goals for 2027
Given the provincial government direction, local engagement and actions become even more important. In Mono, Mulmur and Melancthon, we are fortunate to have supportive and like minded councils. A major focus for $(MC)^2$ in the coming year is to change local dialogue around, and the thinking about, what constitutes responsible development.

When development is proposed in or near a watershed or functioning ecosystem, there are two fundamentally different ways to approach the relationship between development and the natural system.
The Watershed and Ecosystem <u>Accommodation</u> approach asks: As we implement the development plan, how can we minimize, mitigate or compensate for the damage to natural features and systems?

This appears to be the default approach with developers defining a “green” development as one that offers a greater degree of mitigation and compensation. It is an approach that leads eventually to fractured watersheds and ecosystems with effectively isolated ecological features.

The Watershed and Ecosystem <u>Protection</u> Approach asks:
“What level and form of development can occur while ensuring that the watershed and the ecosystems it supports remain viable, resilient and capable of performing their essential functions over the long term?

The fundamental difference is which sets the limits; the development or the natural system?
The bottom line is that Land-Use decisions must ensure that Watersheds and Ecosystems remain viable, resilient and functional over the long term. The Protection approach, by establishing the limits of the natural system before determining how, where and to what extent development can be accommodated, is essential to achieving this goal.

To be clear, we are not expecting provincial government support for Land Use decisions based on the Protection principle. Our aim, between now and the next provincial election, is to make the Watershed and Ecosystem Protection approach to development a part of the local development approval discourse – To get the rational and outcomes of this process into the public record. A record we can bring to the attention of the public and our MPPs.

On behalf of the ELO committee and $(MC)^2$, thank you all for your continued support.