



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

SLSN is an incorporated not-for-profit Member of Ontario Nature.

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(www.slsnc.ca)

Research Partner with The Zephyr Society of Lake Simcoe (www.zephyrsociety.ca)

Member: Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Member: Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Note: Please renew your membership to receive future Newsletters

Meetings and Outings

Meetings: All Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. at the York Region Police Building Meeting Room (Baseline Road between McCowan and Civic Centre Road) unless noted otherwise. No July or August Meetings. Members events (insurance compliance). Visitors welcome.

York Regional Police, 3 District Community Meeting Room
3527 Baseline Road, Georgina.



NOTE: Consistent with YRP recent procedures in place regarding evening use of their Community Meeting Room (CMR), attendees of SLSN meetings must be current members of SLSN in good standing, and may be asked to provide further information, as requested.

Tuesday, Feb.12: “Environmental Conservation: The Challenges” Gord

Zwaigenbaum, SLSN member presents research and thoughts on contemporary issues ranging from local to global in scale. Some interesting conversation and ideas will be solicited and developed.

This is the club Annual Meeting, administration review and election of the coming year officers will be undertaken.

Tuesday, March 12: Arctic Winter Visitors - Birds: There are some birds that travel south to Southern Ontario every winter but in small numbers. This evening research and knowledge/experience presentation will explore two mystery bird of prey species for which there are historical records in South Lake Simcoe, one that visits yearly consistently, the other very rarely. Club members research, presentation and conversation meeting.

Outings: All regular outings – Note: **Paid-up members in good standing may participate (for insurance compliance).**

2019 Winter

Saturday, Feb. 16 **Winter Trail Outing:** A traditional club afternoon adventure in a Regional Forest location in the South Lake Simcoe area. Actual details of the trip will depend on weather and existing conditions snowshoeing, skiing, or hiking. Meet at Coffee Time, Highway 48 south of Baldwin at 1:00 p.m. Dress for the weather. Phone 905-722-8021 if you plan to participate.

Members, please consider writing and submitting an article to the Talon Newsletter. Submit to one of the Executive members.

Phone Paul 905-722-8021 or Norma 905-476-4747 for further information about meetings and naturalist outings.

York Region Forest News

The Region's Hazard Tree Removal contactor will be undertaking work in the Davis Drive, Cronsberry, Godfrey, Pefferlaw, Happy Valley, Nobleton and Brown Hill Tracts beginning on Monday, November 19, 2018. The operation is expected to last up to six weeks. Signs will be posted in the parking lot / main entrance of the forest tract where work is being conducted.

For the safety of the public and workers please keep clear of the operation. Please feel free to forward this email to other forest users. If you have questions phone 905-830-4444 ext.75249.

Sutton Christmas Bird Count (CBC) 2018-12-29

Saturday December 29, 2018 birders in the field and registered feeder watchers in the Georgina, East Gwillimbury and northwest Uxbridge areas participated in the 32nd annual Sutton C.B.C. (Christmas Bird Count).

The day started off fully overcast for owling with a low temperature of almost -7 degrees celsius. As the day went on the temperature rose to -3 degrees by mid-afternoon. A light persistent wind (19 km/hour) from the northwest by afternoon occurred throughout the day, and no snow. The cold early in the morning during the owling and relatively high winds, resulted in less than optimum owling conditions. Lake Simcoe was almost completely open, except for much of Cook's Bay.

A total of 53 species were documented on the day (one of the higher species counts in recent years, unexpected as fewer birds were seen at feeders, but with a fully open Lake Simcoe). Highlights for the count day were a count high of three Owl species seen or heard Great Horned (3), Eastern Screech (3) and Snowy (21) owls seen. Sixteen Bald eagles (16) were recorded, the highest count day record, with all water still open. Lots of waterfowl and gulls were seen on count day, with unexpected Red-breasted merganser (1), and Black ducks (2) being highlights for field birders.

Some of the southern migrating birds still lingering in our count area included White-crowned sparrow (1), White-throated sparrow (2), Eastern bluebird (1) and Carolina wren (1). In the previous few years, the much talked about prediction of northern finches' irruption from the boreal, across southern Canada did not appear in the Sutton Count area. However, in 2018 the Sutton Count highlight was Pine grosbeaks (32) in the count area on the day! See the documentation photo by count birder H. Hart in this Post. Evening grosbeaks were seen on a few occasions in the count area in mid-November and December (first time in many years) but did not make an appearance on count day. Other finches seen were House finch (4), Common redpoll (145) and American goldfinch (176) but no Purple finch or Pine siskin were documented. Interestingly, Horned lark (1) and Snow bunting (263) were welcome winter species additions on count day. Thanks to all field birders and feeder watchers who participated in the count.

Two very late lingering birds documented, we have since been following, are the one lone White-crowned sparrow, and one Great Blue heron at the Black river south of Baldwin area.

They were both last seen yesterday, Saturday (Jan. 5th). With the mercury dropping to minus 17 degrees centigrade tonight, hopefully they are alright.

Paul Harpley



Pine Grosbeaks – pair (male and female)

2018-12-29 Photo – H. Hart photo (with K. Nicholls) Sutton C.B.C.

Ontario Nature Speaks out on Current issues

You have likely heard the very bad news that the Ontario Government will be eliminating the independent office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

I have attached a letter protesting this decision which I hope your group will sign on to. We need to make sure that Premier Ford, Finance Minister Fedeli and all other cabinet ministers hear loud and clear from organizations and individual Ontarians who care about a healthy natural environment in our province.

Please let me know if you are willing to sign on to this letter. We will print

presidents' names and organization logos for all groups who agree to sign. We would like to send this letter next **Monday, November 26th**.

We also have an online letter for individuals to sign. I will send a separate email with the links to the webpage where people can sign. I hope you will forward this email to your distribution lists and invite your members and other contacts to sign. Almost 3,000 people have signed since last Friday. We need many more signatures to clearly demonstrate that this decision is not a good one for the people of Ontario.

Many thanks!

Best wishes,

Caroline

Caroline Schultz, Executive Director



2018-12-15

ECO Commissioner - We need a strong, independent Environmental Commissioner of Ontario



The Government of Ontario announced plans on November 15, 2018 to eliminate the office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) and transfer much of its responsibility to the jurisdiction of the Auditor General. This misguided decision effectively undercuts the power and independence of Ontario's environmental watchdog.

The ECO provides independent, non-partisan oversight of government policies. Simply put, the ECO holds the government accountable when it makes decisions that impact the air we breathe, the water we drink and the natural environment of the people of Ontario. Transferring applications for review of existing or new environmental policy, law or regulation to the relevant government minister instead of an independent Environmental Commissioner is like putting the fox in charge of the chicken house. All independence is lost.

The decision to drastically cut back the office's independent oversight comes just two days after the ECO released a critical report about sensible solutions the government should take to protect our water, wetlands and wildlife that would yield big rewards. Absorbing the Environmental Commission of Ontario into the office of the Auditor General seems like an attempt to silence the voices that urge Ontario to better protect our lands, air and waters. Dressed as an act of fiscal discipline, it is in fact an unabashed attack against the environment and its defenders.

We urgently need you to let the government know that the ECO's vital and independent role enables public participation and government accountability for decisions that significantly impact the environment. These rights are enshrined in our Environmental Bill of Rights. We will not stand by as our remaining natural environment is made vulnerable to be squandered for the short-term benefit of the few.

Please add your voice to tell Premier Ford and Finance Minister Fedeli that Ontarians need the office of the ECO and reject the slashing of this essential oversight and accountability role.

Ontario Nature

2018-12-10

Proposal to establish a hunting season for double-crested cormorants in Ontario

Ontario's high population of double-crested cormorants – birds with a bad reputation for eating fish and nesting habits that kill trees – may be best controlled with government-led deterrence methods, rather than allowing extreme legal hunting of the species, according to York University Professor Gail Fraser.

The Ontario government proposal to establish a hunting season to control the growing number of cormorants is the subject of a public consultation that will end on Jan. 3, 2019. The policy would allow hunters to kill up to 50 cormorants per day; with no limits on the number they could kill during the hunting season.

Many naturalists, zoologists, ecologists and other academics are concerned about many aspects of this proposal especially the 50 cormorants per day limit! **SLSN members please review this proposal on the internet.**

<https://news.hyorku.ca/2018/12/10/will-hunting-cormorant-birds-help-to-protect-ontarios-ecosystem/>

<http://www.bioone.org/doi/10.1675/063.041.0215>

https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/0134124?utm_source=FOCA+Elert+December+2018&utm_campaign=Eler+Dec5+2018&utm_medium=email

<https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/news-story/9058445-opposition-to-proposed-double-crested-cormorant-hunt/>

Bill 66

Mayor and Council Can and Should Reject this Proposed Bill

I believe SLSN should be very concerned about Bill 66 proposed by the current Ontario Government that would give municipalities the power to override important natural heritage, environmental and health and safety existing legislation the government wrongly sees as impeding economic development, in support of jobs through a purported “open for business planning bylaw”.

From review most of the Bill 66 proposed will roll back important aspects of existing legislation such as the Clean Water Act (adopted after the Walkerton tragedy), The Greenbelt Act, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, Oak Ridges Moraine Act, Places to Grow Act (Growth Plan), etc. and is ill-conceived. The wide-ranging Omnibus nature of this legislation is truly concerning and obviously lacks balance and a full understanding of real on the ground land-use planning implications. A central concern is that this proposed Bill would allow municipalities to pass a by-law to place employment uses and secondary uses such as residential and commercial anywhere in Ontario without conforming to these important Acts, and indeed contravene their recent existing Official Plans and Secondary Plans arrived at through extensive local community consultation and good planning process. We would obviously strongly disagree with this. Many other commentators, legal advisers and media and academics have detailed these serious flaws in this policy move and proposed Bill 66. SLSN members previously sent out Conservation E-Blast SLSN 2018-12-10 (attached again to this 2018-12-31 Newsletter). Also, there is lots of additional information and analysis on the internet, including the detailed Bill 66, which anyone can search.

It is noted that no notice or hearing is required prior to the passing of an open-for-business planning by-law. From my inquiries, the provincial government is now advising that the fundamental powers and responsibilities regarding decisions approving development projects is with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This was historically the case, and from my experience, this will actually result in further high-level legal fighting. Despite calling it a planning tool to empower municipalities, it will force local public community members to act against their municipalities more than is presently the case. Ultimately, it is difficult to see how this local purported community-based decision making, seems to be

becoming further top-down administration by municipalities and agencies, which none of us need.

The Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Acts and Plans are integral components of land use planning that complement the Growth Plan to encourage smart planning. We want and need all our local municipalities (consistently across the entire Southern Ontario landscape) to champion the priorities within the existing land-use planning process resulting in the reduction of sprawl, and protection of natural and hydrological features and agricultural lands.

With this Bill 66 it would seem apparent employment uses could be built anywhere in the province without following a well-established public planning process in Ontario. This is poor planning! Our members research, and our own knowledge of our local area and municipalities confirm that there is an excess of economic development land here, and in cities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, that have been identified for that use. There is no need for this legislation, the appropriate lands already are identified.

Regarding the Greenbelt in Ontario, it has protected 1.8 million acres of farmland, local food supplies, the headwaters of our rivers and important forests and wildlife habitat for over 12 years. I am advised that it generates 9.1 billion dollars in revenue each year, creating 161,000 local jobs across 28 municipalities. It ensures our food security by providing us with local food, encouraging young farmers to step in. Its continued clearly defined and defensible boundaries must not be tampered with, for clarity for developers and all the people, wildlife and natural and cultural landscapes of Ontario.

SLSN members would recognize that existing agriculture, tourism and recreation provide enormous economic impact and are an important part of planning for our communities in the province - which cannot be said for more urban sprawl. There are large land areas, including employment lands, already planned and available in excess of the development needs of the GTA without weakening the protections provided by the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine plans, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan, and Clean Water Act- critical to the health of all our communities, and the wildlife we share with them.

SLSN members should ask that municipalities, upon review of Schedule 10 of Bill 66, to stand with us and many others opposing this proposed Bill 66. As many others have noted our communities are not "red tape", our wildlife, rivers and streams, local food security and the future health and well-being of our children is not simply red tape. The provisions of existing Ontario Land-use planning are there for good reason.

Many of our SLSN members are small business people themselves, professionals and others, and are involved in community organizations, and active in social, cultural and natural heritage organizations in our municipalities. At the end of the day, it is up to the local municipality to speak up for their citizens for good, rigorous and open planning process, and I am urging the Mayor and Council of the Town of Georgina to ask the Province of Ontario to immediately abandon this legislation. And, implore that they not use this Bill 66 in the Town of Georgina, should it be passed.

Paul Harpley SLSN

P.S. as well as sending your own individual letters to your municipal Mayor and Council, you can also phone Premier Rob Ford at 416-325-1941, or local M.P.P. Caroline Mulroney at 905-895-1555.

Recent News from other community-based organizations, in South Lake Simcoe.

[View this message online](#)



Dec. 5, 2018

Conservation Authority asks Ford Government to permit DG Group to build subdivision in Greenbelt

It appears that the Ford Government is seriously considering opening up the Greenbelt for a large residential subdivision in the Town of Georgina.

In late November, Mike Walters, CAO of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), met with the senior policy advisor to Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Steve Clark. [The topic was "the proposed transfer of planning approval" long sought by the DG Group](#) and long endorsed by LSRCA. This proposal would allow a 1,073-unit subdivision on DG-owned prime farmland between Deer Park Drive and Boyers Road in the Greenbelt Protected Countryside in exchange for DG giving up its proposed Maple Lake Estates (MLE) project in the Paradise Beach-Island Grove Provincially Significant Wetland.

This exchange was bad planning when it was first proposed in 2013, and it is still bad planning. [The Protected Countryside is there to protect both valuable wetlands, forests and prime farmlands.](#) The previous government firmly slammed the door on the exchange when it issued the updated 2017 Greenbelt Plan, which maintained the Deer Park-Boyers lands as Protected Countryside.

That the new government is now open to reviving this proposal, and reopening the Greenbelt Plan, is troubling on a number of fronts. First, the North

Gwillimbury Forest Alliance has appealed the provisions in the Town of Georgina's Official Plan that permit the MLE development in provincially significant wetlands to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (the successor to the Ontario Municipal Board). We are still waiting for the Tribunal's decision. We believe we have an excellent case and that there is a strong likelihood that Georgina's plan will be amended to prohibit development on these environmentally sensitive lands.

Second, Premier Ford specifically [promised during the provincial election campaign](#) to leave the Greenbelt intact "in its entirety," adding "the people have spoken – we won't touch the Greenbelt." Proceeding with the DG Group's attempt to build sprawl development in the Greenbelt Protected Countryside would be a clear breach of the Premier's promise.

Third, the Town of Georgina recently served DG Group with a stop-work order when it was discovered that DG was cutting trees on the MLE property even though it had not met the town's requirements for commencing any such development activity. This kind of rule-breaking behaviour should not be rewarded with the right to build a subdivision on prime farmlands in the Greenbelt.

Fourth, in its attempt to provide the government with a potential sales pitch for this proposal, the the LSRCA CAO relies heavily on the idea that this would "grow the Greenbelt." This proposal would not grow the Greenbelt; it would only shift land-use designations within the existing Greenbelt. LSRCA has misread and misunderstood the "growing the Greenbelt" concept in the Greenbelt Plan.

Rather than caving to the demands of a large developer, the province and the town [should tell the DG Group to build more homes in the South Keswick area](#), which is already properly zoned for development and well served by Highway 404. This option has the benefit of reducing sprawl, avoiding leapfrog development, and locating development in a designated urban area rather than on prime farmlands in the Greenbelt.

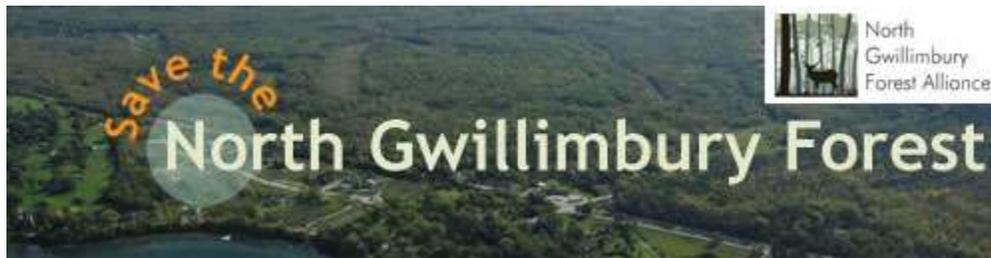
Please [email Premier Ford](#) and ask him to keep his promise to protect the Greenbelt instead of promoting the interests of a large developer.

Promise made, promise needs to be kept.

Thank you.
Jack Gibbons
Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance



[View this message online](#)



Nov. 23, 2018

Special council meeting to discuss DG Group forest destruction

Georgina Council will discuss what actions to take to stop further destructive clearing of the Maple Lake Estates lands by DG Group at a special council meeting on Monday night at 8 p.m.

The municipality issued a "stop work" order to DG Group earlier this month after the company started clearing forest areas on the property without a permit.



The Town's Stop Work Order is a good first step. But more needs to be done. The Town should fully enforce all applicable by-laws; issue all required Notices of Contravention and Orders to Comply; and prosecute all by-law violations to the fullest extent of the law. Upon any conviction, the Town should seek an Order that the DG Group rehabilitate the disturbed lands.

The [council meeting will be held in closed session](#), but will reconvene into an open session

and report on matters discussed in the closed session.

Thank you.

Jack Gibbons
Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance

Lake Simcoe Watch News



Dec. 18, 2018

Andrea Khanjin: Don't gut the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

According to the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*, we must reduce Lake Simcoe's phosphorus pollution by 40% to 44 tonnes per year to prevent algae blooms and weed growth and to protect our cold water fishery (e.g., lake trout and whitefish). We must also protect Lake Simcoe's shorelines, wetlands and forests.

Unfortunately, the Government of Ontario has introduced a new bill, Bill 66, the *Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act*, which, if passed, will permit municipalities to pass special zoning bylaws exempting new developments from the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan's* environmental protection policies and regulations (as well as all other provincial policies and municipal official plans).

And to add insult to injury, these special bylaws could be **passed without public notice, without a**

public meeting, and without any opportunity for appeal.

This is not right. We don't need to sacrifice Lake Simcoe to grow our economy and create jobs.

It has recently come to light [that the development industry played a major role in bankrolling the "Ontario Proud" campaign](#) that helped get the Ford government elected, leading many to question the government's motivations for introducing this sweeping no-holds-barred pro-development legislation.



[Please contact Andrea Khanjin](#)

(andrea.khanjin@pc.ola.org, 705-722-0575), the Member of the Provincial Parliament for Barrie-Innisfil, and ask her to amend Bill 66 to ensure that all new developments in the Lake Simcoe watershed will be subject to the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan's* environmental rules.

[Please pass this message on to your friends and neighbours.](#)

Lake Simcoe Watch is a joint initiative of AWARE Simcoe, the Innisfil District Association, the Lake Simcoe Association, the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance, the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists, the STORM Coalition and the West Oro Ratepayers' Association.

Five Questions for Andrea Khanjin

Yesterday, Andrea Khanjin, MPP for Barrie-Innisfil, sent [a form letter response](#) about Bill 66 to some of Lake Simcoe Watch's supporters.

According to Ms. Khanjin, the purpose of Bill 66 is merely to eliminate "unnecessary, duplicative and outdated regulations that do nothing to protect the environment, health or safety.... Nothing in Bill 66 overrides our commitment to the Greenbelt, or any environmental, health or safety protections."

As a result, we have the following questions for Ms. Khanjin:

1. Please provide us with a complete list of the unnecessary, duplicative and outdated regulations in the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*, the *Greenbelt Act*, the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act*, and the *Clean Water Act* that you think it would be wise to eliminate.
2. If the purpose of Bill 66 is merely to eliminate unnecessary red tape, why does it completely exempt new developments from Section 6 of the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*; Section 7 of the *Greenbelt Act*; Section 7 of the *Oak Ridges Moraine Act* and Section 39 of the *Clean Water Act*? Do you see source water protection and protecting prime agricultural and natural heritage lands as “red tape”?
3. According to the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*, we [must reduce Lake Simcoe's phosphorus pollution by 40% to 44 tonnes per year](#) to prevent algae blooms and weed growth and to protect our cold water fishery. Will the Ford Government develop and implement a plan to achieve this goal by 2026?
4. According to the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*, at least 40% of Lake Simcoe's watershed should consist of high-quality connected forests, wetlands and meadows. Will the Ford Government develop and implement a plan to achieve this goal by 2026?
5. The Town of Georgina has asked the Government of Ontario to allow the DG Group to build a 1,073 unit subdivision on prime farmlands in the Greenbelt. Will the Ford Government say “no” to this request?

[Please pass this message on to your friends and neighbours.](#)

Lake Simcoe Watch is a joint initiative of AWARE Simcoe, the Innisfil District Association, the Lake Simcoe Association, the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance, the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists, the STORM Coalition and the West Oro Ratepayers' Association.

Jack Gibbons
Chair, Lake Simcoe Watch

On December 13th York Regional Council will be appointing seven people to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's (LSRCA) board of directors. As a result of weak leadership from its previous board, the LSRCA has failed to fulfill its mandate to protect Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

It is time for York Region to appoint new people to the LSRCA board of directors who will stand up to developers and take the strong actions that are needed to protect Lake Simcoe.



We need to ensure that **Georgina Councillor Dave Neeson** is one of those seven new people.

For the past four years, Dave Neeson has led the fight on the Georgina Town Council to save the North Gwillimbury Forest's provincially significant wetlands. He has repeatedly shown that he is willing to stand up to one of the province's largest developers on behalf of his community. We need Dave to help focus the LSRCA on its ecosystem-protection mandate, instead of developers' interests.

Specifically, we need Dave Neeson on the board of directors to ensure that the Conservation Authority will work with the province and local municipalities to develop and implement plans to:

1. Reduce Lake Simcoe's phosphorous pollution to 44 tonnes per year by 2026; and
2. Ensure that at least 40% of Lake Simcoe's watershed consists of high-quality, connected forests, wetlands and meadows by 2026.

[Please click here to ask the York Region Councillors to appoint Dave Neeson to the LSRCA's board of directors.](#)

[Please pass this message on to your friends and neighbours.](#)

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