

Conservation E-Blast

2018-12-10

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE



NATURALISTS

Bill 66 – Greenbelt at Risk

**Cutting of the Independent Ontario Environment
Commissioner**

Following out of SLSN members conversation at the Festive Annual Christmas Party find information on two recent Ontario Government actions of Proposed Legislation affecting Natural and Cultural heritage in South Lake Simcoe and the

greater Province of Ontario. SLSN members are strongly encouraged to review these issues and submit personal comment and suggestions to Provincial and Municipal politicians and staff on these initiatives. Some key information on each is included below, some key document links, and additional information can be found easily on the internet.

Letters by SLSN members can be sent via e-mail to,

Premier Doug Ford – doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

MPP Caroline Mulroney (Attorney General) - caroline.mulroneyco@pc.ola.org

Mayor Quirk, Town of Georgia - mquirk@georgina.ca

Mayor Virginia Hackson – vhackson@eastgwillimbury.ca

Your local municipal Councillor (variable by geographic location – e-mails on internet).

And, phoning these individuals is also effective.

Paul Harpley, President SLSN

Bill 66 – Greenbelt at Risk

As recently detailed by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance Bill 66 proposed by the Ontario Ford Government gives municipalities the power to override existing legislation that the government sees as impeding economic development that supports jobs through an open for business planning bylaw.

Most of the legislation they are rolling back is in place to protect the health and safety of the people of Ontario, 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. Bill 66 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.

Employment uses could be built anywhere in the province without following a public planning process. Yet the government itself has noted that there is an excess of economic development land in cities across the GGH and is consulting on whether conversion of that land should be permitted for other uses.

See below some recent Toronto Star and Globe and Mail articles of analysis, reporting and opinion of impact on the Greenbelt and other important Provincial Acts like Lake Simcoe and the Oak Ridges Moraine for reference.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ontario-bill-would-open-up-greenbelt-activists-warn/>

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2018/12/10/developing-the-greenbelt-a-disaster-on-multiple-levels.html>

<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2018/12/09/tories-bill-66-would-undermine-clean-water-protections-that-followed-walkerton-tragedy-victims-and-advocates-warn.html>

<https://tvo.org/article/current-affairs/tories-bill-could-punch-factory-sized-holes-in-the-greenbelt>

<https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalDefenceCanada/videos/vb.52543970197/348946379257194/?type=2&theater>

A petition regarding Bill 66 will be found at Social Media at stopbill66.ca

Also, a recent Joint press release regarding the perils of Ontario's "Open for Business" Bill 66 from Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition and Ontario Headwaters Institute notes the proposed bylaws are intended to fast track development proposals that are primarily (but not limited to) employment uses. But the bar is low. A development application needs only to provide for 50 jobs, in order quality for the use of this bylaw in most of the province. Having provided for jobs, the development application can then include residential, industrial and commercial uses. And since development applications approved under the "Open for Business bylaw" sidestep public consultation and all of the environmental regulations listed (by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance above) and more, it could lead to land uses that contaminate our water and destroy our protected green spaces, and threaten any area in the Greenbelt. This is also the case for the North Gwillimbury Forest area of the Town of Georgina www.SaveNGForest.org.

This situation clearly puts all Greenbelt lands in potential risk of rush developments, without the usual municipal, regional and stakeholder and public review necessary for good landuse planning and is extremely concerning.

Cutting of the Independent Ontario Environment Commissioner

Ontario is about to lose its independent Environmental Commissioner, as part of cuts announced by the Ford government on November 15, 2018. The details were laid out in Bill 57, an omnibus bill. The government cut three independent watchdogs all in the same announcement; Ontario's Child Advocate, the French-Language Services Commissioner and the **Environmental Commissioner**, with some aspects of their work to be passed off to other agencies. These concerns were recently detailed by Ellen Schwartzel's who's past work included advising three Environmental Commissioners, and she was Deputy Environmental Commissioner from 2013 until retiring in July 2018. The full document location is listed below.

SLSN are a member organization of Ontario Nature, an organizations representing communities across Ontario that are dedicated to the conservation and appreciation of the natural environment, who have also expressed our concern that your government has announced its plan to eliminate the independent office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO).

In summary they note that over the years, the ECO has produced numerous in-depth reports on key issues facing Ontario, from climate change to endangered species. This kind of independent, clear-eyed analysis of the impact and effectiveness of government actions and policies is critically important to highlighting whether government actions are resulting in reduced environmental risks or not. We are facing a combined climate and biodiversity crisis and growing impacts on human health. We need the kind of quality evidence-based recommendations – and environmental accountability – that the ECO has regularly produced now more than ever.

Ontario Nature has therefore collectively called on Premier Doug Ford's government to ensure that the ECO continues to exist as a stand-alone, independent office with all of its powers, duties and responsibilities intact under the EBR. We therefore call on you not to proceed with the revisions proposed in schedule 15 to Bill 57 which eliminate the stand-alone office of the ECO. We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you urgently to further discuss and describe the importance of the ECO role to all Ontarians and Ontario's natural environment. The full letter document can be found below, and other information documentations locations.

<http://Ontario%20Nature%20Regional%20Meetings/Letter%20to%20Premier%20re%20ECO%20Nature%20Network%20Nov%2030%202018.pdf>

<https://canadians.org/media/progressive-conservative-party-members-should-cancel-their-donations-oppose-cuts>