

October 6, 2020



E-NEWS BLAST **SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS**

Breaking and continuing notices of Conservation issues in South Lake Simcoe of interest and action potential from SLSN members, below.

2020-10-06

Environmental Defence

Livable Communities

For Immediate Release: October 06, 2020

York Region launches shocking attack on the Greenbelt: Eleven groups call on the Premier to take immediate action

York Region, Ont. – On Thursday October 8th, York Region Council will hold a vote on a proposal to request that the provincial government open the Greenbelt to development. If passed by Council, it will seek permission to prepare a municipal plan designating industrial and commercial employment land development on Greenbelt farmlands and natural areas along 400 series highways. The region also wants the Province to allow it to extend sewers and water mains that run to Lake Ontario deep into the Greenbelt.

Neither of these uses is currently permitted by the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan or the Growth Plan. If York Region Council approves the proposal, it will be turning its back on years of leadership in Moraine and Greenbelt protection.

“Ontarians love the Greenbelt, yet some municipalities and developers keep pushing for paving these protected lands. Premier Doug Ford must immediately make it clear that opening the Greenbelt to development is against the law and will never be approved by the provincial government,” said Tim Gray, Executive Director, Environmental Defence.

Astonishingly, this attack on the Greenbelt is not based on a need for more development land, as evidence from the development industry’s own planning consultants shows there are 12,000 hectares of land currently approved for development within municipal boundaries in York Region (page 98). This is larger than the entire area of the City of Richmond Hill and only slightly less than half the existing built employment land. Of this amount, 3,400 ha are employment lands, and 2,600 ha remain vacant as of 2017 (slide 1), larger than the total land area of King City.

If the removal of these lands from the Greenbelt is approved, they would likely end up as malls and sprawling subdivisions since surplus employment lands can be converted to commercial or residential zoning. “This is the not-so-thin edge of the wedge” said Cindy Whitelaw, Chair, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine. “A fact that’s underscored by the Region’s mention of looking forward to developing additional lands along the proposed Highways 413 and Holland Marsh Expressway (Bradford By-pass) if they are built through the Greenbelt.”

“These Greenbelt lands are in essence employment lands now,” said Debbie Gordon of Save the Maskinonge, because they are protected farmland that employs people and is part of Ontario’s largest industry: agriculture. “The Greenbelt is the only place in southern Ontario where farmlands are not being rapidly lost. This cannot be allowed to change.”

The request for the extension of Lake Ontario linked sewers and water mains is also a Trojan horse for low-density sprawl. Currently, they are not permitted to be extended into the Greenbelt because they stimulate more residential and commercial development in the middle of natural areas and farmland.

Two of the three areas proposed are in the Lake Simcoe watershed, and the area on Highway 400 between King and Vaughan contains areas of high quality natural cover. “It is inappropriate to take out natural areas that should be protected through the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, just when its legislative review is about to begin. We need better protection of these important natural features, not more malls,” said Claire Malcomson, Executive Director, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition.

“We are deeply concerned about piping water from, and sewage to, Lake Ontario,” said Andrew McCammon, Executive Director, Ontario Headwaters Institute. “This is the time to fix existing water problems, such as salt in lakes and groundwater, algae caused by phosphorus in sewage, and the lack of water conservation, not create more problems with ill-considered, expensive, and prohibited pipelines.”

“This is another attempt by the development industry to pave over the Greenbelt”, said Dr. Anne Bell, Director of Conservation and Education, Ontario Nature. “If the provincial government opens the Greenbelt at York Region’s request, it would set a terrible precedent. It would contradict repeated assurances by the Premier that the Greenbelt is off limits to development. Land speculators would make millions while the rest of us would lose precious farmland and natural areas forever.”

The Greenbelt was established in 2005 and permanently protects two million acres of farmlands and natural areas. Close to **90 per cent of Ontarians** support its ongoing protection (link to poll).

Consult this a **backgrounder** for more information about the York Region Council Staff Report recommending development in the Greenbelt.

Take Action: Ask Georgina York Region Council Members what they are doing?

Georgina

Margaret Quirk, Mayor, mquirk@georgina.ca

Robert Grossi, Regional Councillor, rgrossi@georgina.ca

Or, your local ward councillor.

More Info: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2020/10/06/york-region-launches-shocking-attack-greenbelt-eleven-groups-call-premier-take-immediate-action/>

Signatory Groups

York Region Environmental Alliance

York Simcoe Nature Club

Sustainable Vaughan

Save the Oak Ridges Moraine

Save the Maskinonge

Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

South Lake Simcoe Naturalists

Environmental Defence

Ontario Headwaters Institute

Ontario Nature

Wilderness Committee

This action by York Region Council members is very concerning. The health of Lake Simcoe and its tributary rivers has been a long-term focus of SLSN. Over many years our organization has contributed data to many research programmes and inventory projects like the Atlas of Breeding Birds, the Atlas of Reptiles and Amphibians, landscape ecology research and others informing the science (through journal papers, book chapters and conference presentations) of the Greenbelt, and Oak Ridges Moraine in the South Lake Simcoe area.

In June 1991 SLSN planned and convened an early, major event “Lake Simcoe Conference and Festival” in Georgina at the Baldwin conference centre. Attendees came from all around Lake Simcoe and beyond. Key presenters from SLSN, LSRCA, Ontario Universities and municipal, provincial, and federal politicians including two Ministers of Environment (provincial and federal) contributed to sessions and workshops. This early Lake Simcoe event like others through the years, helped initiate and inform the eventual establishment of the Greenbelt, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Acts and Plans.

The SLSN have contributed for almost 30 years to many planning and research programs including the Lake Simcoe Act and Plan (LSAP), the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund (LSCUF), the Oak Ridge Moraine Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and many municipal Official and Secondary Plans. **All these landuse planning policy and associated tools are interrelated, work together, and should not be weakened or piecemeal breached as York Region Council is proposing on October 8th with their vote to request that the provincial government open the Greenbelt to development.**

Paul Harpley, President SLSN

Cormorant Hunt Ontario - Petition

Stop the Fall Hunt of Double-Crested Cormorants in Ontario



Cole Swanson started this petition to **John Yakabuski (Minister, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry)**

To **Minister John Yakabuski**, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Cc: **Premiere Doug Ford** (doug.fordco@pc.ola.org), **Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson**, **Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada** (Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca), **Ontario's Regional Director General's Office** (ec.grandslacs-greatlakes.ec@canada.ca)

Started: August 6, 2020

Dear Minister Yakabuski;

On July 31, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a 90-day fall hunt of double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) where a hunter can take 15 birds per day. **As concerned residents of Ontario, we oppose this hunt on the grounds that no scientific evidence was provided for its justification.**

The claims made in both the original proposal (November, 2018) and the announcement of the hunt (July, 2020) are that double-crested cormorants decimate commercial fish stocks, compromise trees and vegetation to a significant degree, pollute water systems, and impact other colonial bird nesting sites. To date, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has provided no scientific research validating the accusations that double-crested cormorants have impacted the aforementioned environmental systems to a significant degree, or that the population control measures involved in this hunt will improve the health of the ecosystem.

The MNRF has not provided any scientific data required to qualify the bag limits as sustainable to the overall cormorant population. There are an estimated 197,000 registered small game hunters and only 143,000 individual cormorants in Ontario; if 0.5% of hunters reached the daily limit for ten days, the Minister's hunt would allow the numbers killed to exceed the estimated breeding population in Ontario.

The results of this hunt could be disastrous for both the populations of cormorants in the province, but also for birds of similar appearance, like the common loon (*Gavia immer*), the red-throated loon (*G. stellata*), the pacific loon (*G. pacifica*), and rare cormorant species sighted in Ontario, including the great cormorant (*P. carbo*) and the neotropic cormorant (*P. brasilianus*). Furthermore, the Minister has presented no information as to what steps his enforcement officers will take to ensure that daily bag limits not exceeded and ensure the proper disposal of carcasses. To date, the Minister has not indicated how his staff will measure health of the species, as the federal government does for other migratory birds. Finally, the Minister has not indicated if his Ministry will report on the impacts of the hunt overall.

Minister Yakabuski, we call on you and your government to provide a science-based, detailed and peer-reviewed report that analyses the announced fall cormorant hunt.

At a minimum, the report must address the following:

- Why are cormorants designated as “game” birds when they are not as demonstrated by the amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act which allows hunters to waste the birds?
- Cormorant population (numbers of breeding birds and colonies) and harvest goals, including analyses on hunt levels of 15 birds per day, the incorporation of other ongoing

management activities (e.g., cull on Middle Island Point Peele National Park) and an estimate of how the population will respond to the harvest to ensure a sustainable population.

- Will the number of cormorants killed be collected and if so, how and when?
- How will the incidental take of other species, like the common loon, be assessed?
- How will the MNRF coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in managing the interior and migratory population of cormorants?
- Why did your Ministry choose a provincial wide hunt instead of targeted localized management approaches, specifically with respect to fish populations believed to be impacted by cormorants and impacts to habitat?

Cormorants are a species native to Ontario. A significant amount of financial resources was invested in creating a healthier environment which allowed them to recover; their abundance is a conservation success story. We demand that the MNRF uphold their commitment to environmental sustainability by engaging with scientific research in the planning and implementation of a double-crested cormorant hunt. **Until the scientific rigour demanded herein is demonstrated, plans for a hunt must cease.**

Scientific data and support for this petition has been provided by Dr. Gail Fraser (Ecologist & Double-crested Cormorant Specialist, York University) and the Animal Alliance of Canada.



Sept. 23, 2020

NGFA to call on Conservation Authority board to stop issuing illegal wetland destruction permits

North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance (NGFA) lawyer Kent Elson will be speaking to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) board this Friday, Sept. 25th about why it needs to address its staff's actions in issuing an illegal wetland destruction permit to DG Group (DG Group surrendered the permit on Aug. 19th).

Because DG Group could reapply for a permit at anytime, Mr. Elson is asking the LSRCA to:

1. Respond in writing to each of the points in his August 11th letter, which explained why the DG Group's wetland destruction permit was unlawful;
2. Immediately notify the NGFA and the Town of Georgina if the DG Group applies for another permit; and
3. If the DG Group applies for another permit, grant the NGFA and the Town of Georgina the opportunity to make submissions on its application before the LSRCA makes a decision.

Jack Gibbons
Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance

416-260-2080 ext. 2
info@savengforest.org

The North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance is alerting Georgina residents and visitors to the potential impacts of new development on the area's forests and waters.

Rescue Lake Simcoe Deputation

Monday, September 28th, Claire made a delegation on behalf of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition to Georgina Council at 7 pm. We would like your help by getting the message to Council that we want them to pass the resolution below. Please make a quick call to say you support the resolution to protect Lake Simcoe, and share this email with your contacts in Georgina.

The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition has been campaigning to Protect Our Plan (the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan) since late 2018. We've developed priorities, research,

factsheets, websites, videos and more. All available at www.rescuelakesimcoe.org The Province is going to review the Plan this fall and may make changes, good or bad.

We think we have a chance at Lake Simcoe of keeping our environmental legislation strong! But Councils need to support the lake. They will do that if you remind them.

Thank you! Your small effort makes a big difference!

Resolution:

WHEREAS a healthy environment provides the foundation for healthy communities, healthy people, and a healthy economy; and

WHEREAS the passage of the Lake Simcoe Protection Act received unanimous, all party support in the Ontario legislature in 2008;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the Town of Georgina calls on the Government of the Province of Ontario to demonstrate its commitment to clean water and a healthy Lake Simcoe by ensuring that provisions in the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan that protect water quality are not weakened and that policies protecting natural heritage be strengthened during the statutory review of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan; and

Be it further resolved that the Town of Georgina requests that the Ontario Government and affected Provincial Ministries work collaboratively with and all levels of Government, including First Nations, to resource programs that improve Lake Simcoe's water quality and achieve the goals and targets of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan.

Be it further resolved that copies of this resolution be provided to Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Official Opposition Leader Andrea Horvath, MPP John Fraser, MPP Mike Schreiner, York Simcoe MPP Mulroney, and MPP Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Claire Malcolmson

Executive Director

Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition
