

The Honourable John Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6



Claire Malcolmson
Rescue Lake Simcoe Charitable Foundation
120 Primeau Dr.
Aurora, ON
L4G 6Z4

March 4, 2020

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

I am writing to share with you my concern about Lake Simcoe's health, and to urge you to do whatever is in your power, to protect the *jewel of Southern Ontario*, primarily through the creation of the promised Lake Simcoe Clean Up Fund.

I am the Executive Director of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition. The Coalition represents twenty-five member groups around Lake Simcoe that share a concern for the lake's health, and a desire to improve its future.

As you consider Federal programs and spending, I urge you to support the implementation of the Ontario's **Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, 2009 (LSPP)**. The LSPP was introduced ten years ago, and any day now it will undergo a statutory provincial review. *The Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008* is the best watershed-based legislation in Canada and is a model for other inland lakes. To ensure that it is successful, we would like the Government of Ontario to develop and implement a plan to achieve two critical targets of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, namely, i) *reduce phosphorus pollution to 44 tonnes per year; and ii) achieve at least 40% high quality natural cover in the watershed.*

The Federal government could assist the achievement of these goals in these key ways:

- 1. Reinstate the Lake Simcoe Clean Up Fund, a promise made by both the Liberals and Conservatives in the last federal election campaign.**

Between 2007 and 2017 the Federal Conservatives spent \$59 million at Lake Simcoe, some on Georgian Bay, on restoration projects. A backgrounder on the fund says, "Lake Simcoe/Southeastern Georgian Bay Clean-Up Fund builds on the success of the previous fund by supporting community-based projects that are focused on priorities such as lowering phosphorus inputs, restoring wildlife and aquatic habitat, and dealing with nearshore toxic and nuisance algae

growth.” Naturally, in a non-partisan way, we support the Clean Up Fund, as there is an identified need for more than \$200 million of work needed to bring down phosphorus loads.

However, there are some changes that would make the **Lake Simcoe Clean Up Fund** more effective and accessible to the grassroots and community-based organizations that might access the funds and further their work. LSCUF would be improved by streamlining all of the approvals and communication required by all departments and levels of government; and by allowing for education and communication activities in a more explicit way.

2. Increase protection of natural areas

The UN Convention on Biodiversity established the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, one of which is, “Target 1. By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, are conserved through networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.” Recently the Federal government has expanded their funding program for this initiative to allow for the purchase of smaller parcels, which is particularly applicable to southern Ontario. We are very supportive of this change. Federal elected representatives can help with this initiative by promoting, facilitating, and supporting the work of land trusts that operate in Simcoe County. For more information see <https://whc.org/lctf/>

The federal government could establish regional targets for protected areas. 40 – 50 % natural cover is generally recommended for Southern Ontario, by Environment Canada in *How Much Habitat is Enough?* For more information, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition natural cover mapping in Simcoe County, and our recommendations see: https://www.simcoecountygreenbelt.ca/greenlands_report

3. Fund green infrastructure investments

Protecting “green infrastructure” is simple, economical, and effective.ⁱ For instance, a Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority report found that the value of Lake Simcoe wetlands’ ecosystem services is approximately \$435 million each year.ⁱⁱ One helpful step would be to create a targeted green/natural infrastructure fund to advance natural infrastructure solutions, rather than embedding this work in the funding of “grey” infrastructure. Should the Federal Government bring back the Lake Simcoe Clean Up Fund, it should prioritize funding activities that simultaneously address phosphorus loads, climate change adaptation and mitigation activities and green infrastructure.

4. Tackle climate change

Climate change is absolutely one of the main stressors affecting the Lake’s health. We would like the Federal government to incentivize municipal and regional climate change action. Municipalities that want to invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation should be supported. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is funded by the Federal government

through the Green Municipal Fund; are happy to see it at work in our watershed:

<https://bit.ly/2Tbukt9>

At Lake Simcoe, funding the upgrading, replacement, installation of, or naturalizing of stormwater management systems is of critical importance, and funding is hard to come by. As well, increasing natural cover, and improving stream bank cover are of high importance, and are both an adaptation and mitigation activity.

The Lake will not get better with words alone. Lake Simcoe is stressed and needs protecting by all levels of government.

Will you honour the commitments made to reinstate the Lake Simcoe Clean Up Fund? I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Malcolmson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire Malcolmson

Executive Director

Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

CC

Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau

Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister Chrystia Freeland

Minister of Natural Resources, Seamus O'Regan

Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Catherine McKenna

MP Newmarket, Tony Van Bynen

MP Markham Stouffville, Helena Jaczek

MP Peterborough Kawartha, Maryam Monsef

MP Pickering Uxbridge Jennifer O'Connell

MP Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Leona Alleslev

MP Haliburton Kawartha Lakes Brock, Jamie Schmale

MP Durham, Erin O'Toole

MP Simcoe North Bruce Stanton

MP Barrie Innisfil John Brassard

MP Barrie Springwater Oro-Medonte Doug Shipley

MP York Simcoe Scot Davidson

NDP House leader, spokesperson on Finance, Deputy Spokesperson on Canadian Heritage, MP Peter Julian

NDP Critic for Environment & Climate Change

NDP Deputy Critic for Finance, MP Daniel Blaikie

Green party leader, Elizabeth May

Sources

ⁱ Wilson, Sarah, 2008. Lake Simcoe Basin's Natural Capital: The Value of the Watershed's Ecosystem Services. <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/reports/2008/lake-simcoe-basins-natural-capital/>

Ducks Unlimited, 2011. A Business Case for Wetland Conservation: Black River Subwatershed. http://www.ducks.ca/assets/2012/06/duc_blackriver_case.pdf

ⁱⁱ Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, 2010. Black River Subwatershed Plan. Page 248. <https://www.lsrca.on.ca/Shared%20Documents/reports/black-river-subwatershed-plan.pdf>