

January 30, 2023

Dear Lake Simcoe municipal Councils,

Please see below the letter circulated to our watershed MPs today regarding the Federal budget and the Freshwater Action Fund. The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition is in support of the Bradford West Gwillimbury motion of January 17th, 2023 which we understand is being circulated to municipalities shortly.

We would like to encourage every Council to pass a similar motion in support of funding for cleaning up lake Simcoe via the Freshwater Action Fund. We thank BWG for their leadership.

Best regards,

Claire Malcolmson, Executive Director
Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Minister Freeland
Minister Guilbeault
Minster Murray

And Lake Simcoe MPs

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RE: Federal Budget 2023: “Freshwater Action Fund” and Lake Simcoe

About us: The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition is a lake-wide member-based organization, representing 29 groups in the Lake Simcoe watershed, that provides leadership and inspires people to take action to protect Lake Simcoe.

The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition supports a Bradford West Gwillimbury Council resolution, passed unanimously, on Tuesday January 17, 2023 (item 16.1 Lake Simcoe - Freshwater Action Plan - Federal Funding Motion). This motion will be sent to all Lake Simcoe watershed municipalities in early 2023 requesting that they pass similar motions.

The preamble of the motion noted that the 2022 federal budget included a new “Freshwater Action Fund” with a one-year commitment of \$19.6 million to help watersheds across the country. Lake Simcoe was one of the watersheds identified as a beneficiary of this fund. The announcement did not include details of the projects these funds would support.

Be it resolved, therefore, that the Town of ...

- A. Supports federal funding for Lake Simcoe that represents a significant percentage of the overall Freshwater Action Plan Fund, with funding and details beginning in the 2023 year that would honour Minister Freeland’s commitment to Lake Simcoe of \$40 million over 5 years;
- B. Asks that such federal funding be used to undertake:
 - Shoreline mitigation and restoration, including in the tributaries of the Holland River, Maskinonge River and Black River, and the Holland Marsh;
 - Planting of 250,000 trees in the watershed;
 - Projects to ameliorate contaminated sites in the watershed;
 - Upgrades to help retrofit and improve the environmental efficiency of municipal infrastructure such as wastewater and stormwater facilities;

- Purchasing and conservation of more natural heritage sites such as forests and wetlands under the auspices of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.
- *RLSC members add:*
 - i. *Supporting Land Trusts to conserve land as well as Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas;*
 - ii. *Subsidizing alternatives to road salt (which are more expensive than conventional road salt) throughout the watershed, especially along roads close to rivers and the lake.*

While the purpose of this letter is to support the above expenditures, we wish to also make some points about how Federal decision making can support healthy outcomes for Lake Simcoe. As stewards of public money, it is critical that the Federal government not spend good money after bad to clean up polluting activities that should never be permitted in the first place. Given the really serious degradation to our planet's ecosystem as addressed at last month's COP15 conference in Montreal, the Federal government must now pull out all the stops to protect our water quality, our fish, human health, and the \$420 million / year sustainable recreation sector that relies on a healthy lake.

For instance, it is inefficient, expensive, and short sighted to spend significant amounts of public money on infrastructure projects like the Bradford Bypass, and then spend more public money to try to overcome the destructive impacts to our climate and our water that were directly caused by this highway. Lake Simcoe is on a trajectory to reach chronic levels of salinity in 37 years, a doomsday timeline that has sped up as development and highways have increased in the watershed. Salt mitigation measures used on highway 404 have not worked. Denying Federal infrastructure funding for this project, denying fisheries permits, denying Federal species at risk permits, regulating road salt use, and re-evaluating the decision to do a Federal Impact Assessment are all examples of actions the Federal government can do to uphold its commitments to clean water and climate at Lake Simcoe.

The Bradford Bypass is not subject to a proper and updated Environmental Assessment (EA) because the province of Ontario exempted it from rules that would have required a new EA due to the age of the concept and the absence of project updates. Its fast-tracked EA relies on a 1990's era decision about where to locate the highway that completely disregards the current understanding of the urgent need to protect our wetlands and forests, to protect human health from highway air pollution, and to plan our communities in ways that minimize pollution and costs. Impacts to Lake Simcoe

are not being studied. A reconsideration of the route is the least our governments can offer.

It must also be stated that highway building through the Greenbelt into greenfield areas is a fundamental part of the province of Ontario's government plan to open up what is now nearly 46,800 acres of new greenfield land for housing development.¹ Developers will now be permitted to build lower density developments on these environmentally important lands than prior provincial Growth Plan rules allowed. And in northern York Region, there is still no acceptable or approved sewage solution to service the growth. It is finally time for us to come to the realization that northern York Region cannot possibly support the magnitude of population growth the Ontario government is imposing on it. Altogether, the province of Ontario's actions take us in the wrong direction from a sustainability point of view. To protect our climate and our water, and to address the most urgent housing needs in Ontario, we need more compact and affordable housing in our existing settlement area boundaries which rely on transit instead of new highways and expensive car dependency.

Lake Simcoe does not exist in a bubble. Ontario's land use planning changes in our watershed will increase phosphorus pollution, which, along with warmer water temperatures and the addition of more salt, combine to create the conditions for more algae outbreaks. Protecting Lake Simcoe requires a holistic approach to planning and protection. We are counting on you to use the powers you have, and to spend the money you have promised, to protect our lake, its people, and its outdoor recreation economy.

Sincerely,
Claire Malcolmson, Executive Director, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

SIGNATORIES

Kevin Thompson, SOS Beaverton
Charles Foster, Chair, Forbid Roads Over Green Spaces
Margaret Prophet, Executive Director, Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition
Andrew McCammon, Executive Director, Ontario Headwaters Institute
AWARE Simcoe
Beverley Else, Director, Innisfil District Association
Pamela Fulford, Advisory Board, Couchiching Conservancy

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-just-got-14-000-hectares-of-land-to-develop-so-why-does-doug-ford-want-the-greenbelt-too-1.6647857> story reports on total of 37,500 acres, plus 9,300 in Durham Region = 46,800 acres.

CC: via email
MP Leah Taylor Roy
MP VanBynen
MP Doug Shipley
MP Adam Chambers
MP Scot Davidson
MP John Brassard
MP Jamie Shmale
MP Erin O'Toole
MP Terry Dowdell