

From: Debbie Gordon
Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 4:02 PM
To: Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>
Subject: Committee of the Whole March 4th

March 2nd, 2021

Dear Members of Committee of the Whole

I am writing to you today about :

F3: Lake Simcoe Protection Plan 10-Year Review Consultation - Regional Staff Comments

I have been involved with protecting and restoring the Maskinonge River that flows into Lake Simcoe since 1998. My focus has been on water quantity, quality and habitat.

In 2010 Save the Maskinonge was a project partner with Town of East Gwillimbury, Town of Georgina, York Simcoe Naturalist and York Stewardship on a multi year project coordinated by Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. The project was funded by the Lake Simcoe Clean Up Federal Fund and we had a full time coordinator and municipal staff support.

In your report Erin Mahoney and Paul Freeman recommend reducing phosphorus and states wastewater is only 2% loading a year. Agriculture and urban storm water is causing the majority of phosphorus input to Lake Simcoe.

1. Accelerate measurable phosphorus reductions in Lake Simcoe by focusing on the most impactful and cost-effective actions to address non-point sources

1. 2. Develop, fund and commit to a time-bound implementation plan for reducing phosphorus

There needs to be evidence off sets would work and BMP's could be implemented. It will take a lot of time and money to implement them. Could offsets even work at the level suggested quickly enough to be meaningful? Is there any science or data to suggest it is possible?

Although the Maskinonge is not a large river it has been well studied in part because it is connected to the Oak Ridges Moraine so we have a lot of data. We see it like the canary in the mine.

OAK RIDGES MORaine CONSERVATION PLAN FINAL LSRCA WATERSHED PLANS
York Region Council June 2010

The Maskinonge is experiencing impacts from high levels of agriculture/sod farming along with some urban impacts including:

- Naturally low water levels exacerbated by takings for sod farming/market gardens
- Water quality issues (phosphorus - fertilizer use; high levels of some pesticides in recent samples)
- Very low levels of forest cover and forest interior
- An "impaired" benthic community, with the fish community showing impacts in some areas (e.g. areas with coldwater conditions that do not support coldwater species) As part of the Oak Ridges Moraine

The Maskinonge River BMPs were identified with mapping as a pilot project and even with having that information the reality of getting land owners to permit them even when we had full funding was very difficult. LSRCA mailed out hundreds of letters, some as far as Hong Kong and Hawaii. Much of the land on Lake Simcoe watersheds was purchased decades ago by speculators or developers who have no desire to add environmental features to properties they hope to one day develop.

We had an extra intern one summer and went door to door with a binder with all the BMPs marked on maps offering funding for projects. Many of the large properties were rented with the farm building falling into disrepair and the lands being rented to local crop farmers. In the end we did accomplish many projects on the watershed but the majority were small rural and urban properties. The majority of the more serious areas of damage we could not address the BMPs, even with full funding for projects available. You can't force land owners to do them.

It is not all doom and gloom and we have had some signs our projects have made a difference. A cold water fish species has been detected and river otters returned but it has been an expensive and time consuming process. In town the native plantings, wildflowers and shorelines have been improved but compared to tractors plowing through streams and no buffers is it truly making a big impact on phosphorus?

In my opinion we need to reach the target of 55% reduction of phosphorus and increase our water quality quickly. Thousands of people depend on the lake for their drinking water.

We can't afford to spend years on a phosphorus reduction strategy while development proceeds under a business as usual situation. Until we have a well researched plan for phosphorus reduction across all sectors we need to protect against the impacts of the only growing source of phosphorus pollution at Lake Simcoe, and that is development.

Regards,

Debbie Gordon
Save the Maskinonge
Georgina, Ontario