

# THE TINY COTTAGER

Issue No. 48

A GEORGIAN BAY PERSPECTIVE

Fall/Winter 2016

## President's Message

By PAUL COWLEY

As we slide into a lovely fall, the temperatures and weather continue to be wonderful, following what was potentially one of the most glorious, hot and sunny summers on record.

This amazing weather was especially welcome for the 2nd annual Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament held at the Midland Golf Club on August 19. Once again FoTTSA and *The Tiny Cottager* were pleased to be the title sponsor for this wonderful event, which was created to help charities in our community.

The 36 golf foursomes were all sold and the delicious dinner (catered by Phil's Catering) was well attended by over 200 people. Frisbee and soccer ball golf added an element of interest to the tournament.

Each year two charities are chosen to receive donations from the event. This year Hearts and Minds (RVH Child & Youth Mental Health Services serving the residents of North Simcoe) and the Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre were chosen.

A record \$37,000 was raised thanks to many generous sponsors and participants. Each charity received \$16,000 and, in addition, a \$5,000 Tiny Township Bursary Fund was set up. FoTTSA is proud to be part of such a worthwhile event.

Tiny Council's Town Hall Meetings continue to be popular and have proven to be an excellent way of establishing a close connection between Council and Tiny residents. Both sides have clearly benefitted from a better understanding of the challenges our township is facing. I encourage everyone to attend the next Town Hall meeting.

And finally I would be remiss if I did not comment on our water levels and quality. We are in fact about 13in above the long term average but, with significantly above average water temperatures, we can expect higher levels of evaporation this fall and winter. This water loss will lower the water levels - just how much only time will tell.

McMaster University's Dr. Pat Chow-Fraser tracks the impact of water levels on water quality, the fishery and wetlands. We continue to support her scholarly work: it underlines the need for our government to respond positively to the International Joint Commission's recommendation that Lake Michigan/Huron (including Georgian Bay) water levels should be restored to a healthy range.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving and a good winter!

## Mayor's Golf Tournament Raises \$37,000

More photos on page 11



(L to R) Councillor Cindy Hastings, Deputy Mayor Steffen Walma, FoTTSA reps. Doug Kirk & Doug Moles, Mayor George Cornell, Councillor Richard Hinton, FoTTSA reps Mary-Jane Price & Brian Bradstreet and Councillor Gibb Wishart (photo Andrew Chomentowski)

## Expanded Greenbelt Would Help Protect our Water Resources

By MARGARET PROPHET, CO-CHAIR OF THE SIMCOE COUNTY GREENBELT COALITION

The Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition (SCGC) represents over 30 ratepayer, naturalist, agricultural and environmental organizations that want to see the Greenbelt expand into Simcoe County. We feel that expanding the Greenbelt into the county aligns with provincial priorities and criteria.

We hope that the province gives particular attention to Recommendation 71 of the Crombie Report, which highlights the potential to grow the Greenbelt beyond its existing boundary based on areas of ecological and hydrological significance. The Report from a panel led by former Toronto mayor David Crombie was received by the Ontario government in December 2015. It made 87 recommendations, including expansion of the Greenbelt to protect more lands from development and tighten controls on settlement expansions.

Simcoe County would make a strong candidate to be a part of Greenbelt expansion, based on the panel's key considerations:

**- Protection of areas that sequester and store carbon or protect and improve resilience to climate change:** The county has vast wetland complexes of local, provincial and international significance such as Minesing Wetlands, Wye Marsh and Tiny Marsh, which are significant carbon sinks. Natural coverage in sub-

watershed is high compared to every other region in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This network of forests and ground cover provides a front line defense against climate change.

**- Rural Source Water Protection Priorities:** The Oro Moraine, which directly supplies drinking water to over 20,000 people, is also the source of numerous water-courses feeding both Lake Simcoe and Severn Sound. The Nottawasaga watershed provides water for daily use for many rural Simcoe communities and irrigation for many agricultural operations. All residents of Tiny Township depend on groundwater for daily use, making it imperative that recharge areas and aquifers are adequately protected through land use policies.

**- Protection of adjoining areas of critical hydrological significance, such as important surface water areas, key headwaters, moraines, groundwater recharge areas, highly vulnerable aquifers etc.:** A large portion of the Lake Simcoe watershed that is currently outside of the Greenbelt is considered medium-to-high vulnerability for groundwater supply and contains many highly vulnerable aquifers. The Nottawasaga Valley watershed contains many highly vulnerable aquifers especially around the Minesing Wetlands and

see GREENBELT. . . on page 6

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GREENBELT . . . continued from first page

areas to the north and west of it (Source: South Georgian Bay Source Water Protection Plan).

It must not be forgotten that a main vision of the Greenbelt was to protect against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and support agriculture as the predominant land use. Tiny Township is rich in productive farmland.

Based on the Crombie panel's recommendations, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is potentially looking at expanding the Greenbelt to protect water features that are "under pressure from urban growth". This describes Simcoe County. Both the 2006 Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe County, Barrie and Orillia (IGAP) and the 2009 draft amendments to the Places to Grow Act, Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth stressed the importance of managing the intense growth pressures on Simcoe County to protect water and environment. But, despite assimilative capacity studies done on the Nottawasaga and Lake Simcoe Watersheds that determined both were nearing their limit to accommodate further growth, even more large-scale developments have since been planned for the region.

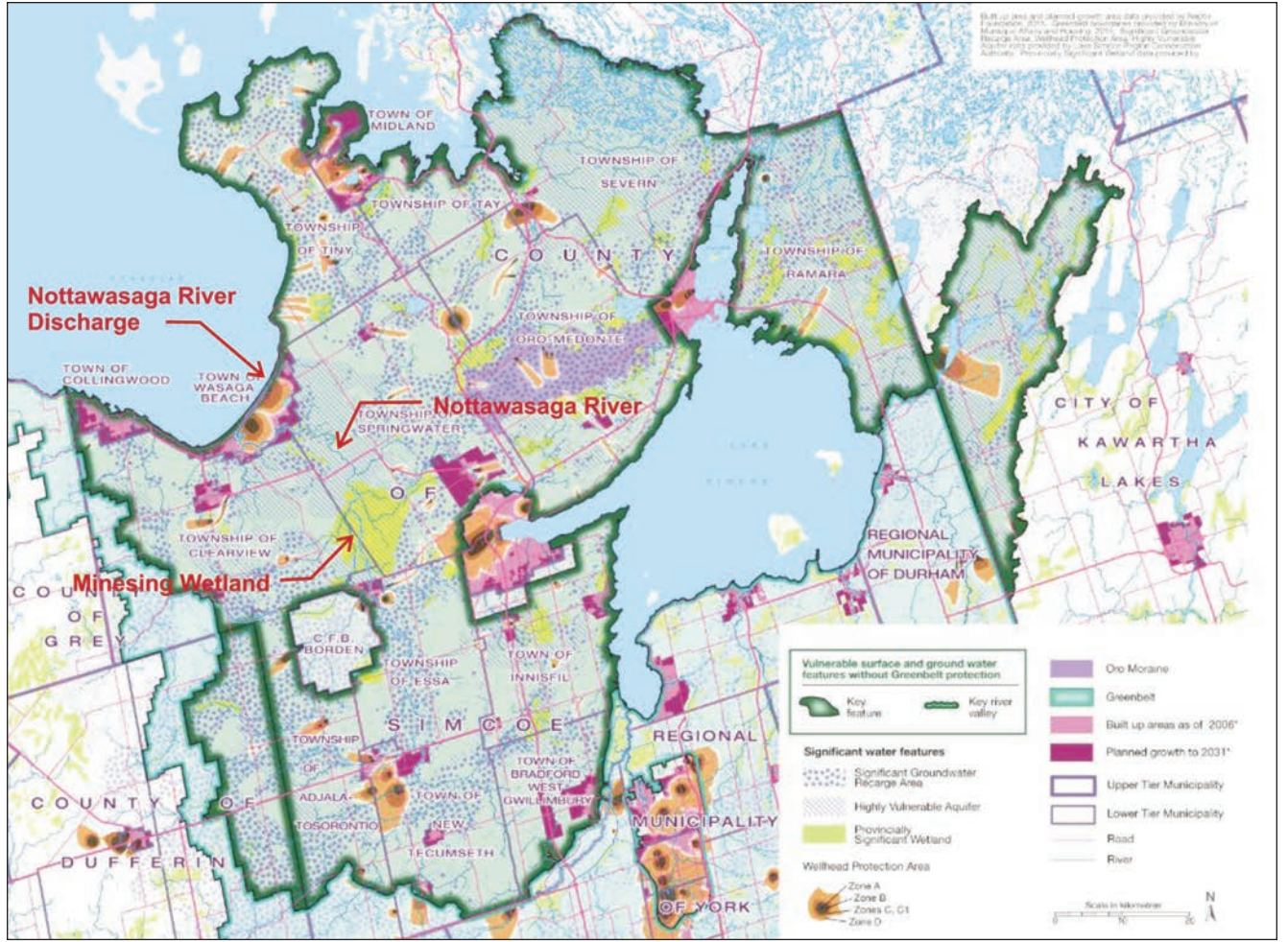
**Declining watershed health indicators:**

As was to be expected, indicators of watershed health have signaled our water resources are increasingly under stress:

- Declining trends in wetland health and forest cover as well as "poor" overall stream health (Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), 2013 Watershed Health Check)
- Poor to fair surface water quality in sub watersheds that are the most urbanized in Simcoe County (NVCA and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), 2013 Watershed Health Checks)
- Increasing turbidity and nutrient loading in Nottawasaga River during low flows (NVCA Water Quality Monitoring Report)
- Above-average amount (7) of Level 1 low water responses (NVCA) versus other watersheds (5.5) as well as Nottawasaga Valley watershed enduring those conditions 50% longer comparatively (Conservation Ontario, Low Water Response Data 2001-2013)
- 250% increase in beach advisories for Simcoe County beaches from 2007-2015 (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit)
- Projections that municipal wells may need to be drilled deeper, new sources of water be found and surface water intake pipes be moved or redesigned to respond to drops in aquifer levels, lake levels and changing precipitation patterns as a result of climate change (South Georgian Bay Source Water Protection Plan: Assessment Reports for NVCA, LSRCA and Severn Sound Environmental Association).
- Historical extent of cool and cold water streams within the Nottawasaga River watershed has been restricted due to loss of forest cover and wetlands and construction of ponds on streams (NVCA Instream Temperature Monitoring Summary). These coldwater fishery habitats support one of the largest spawning populations of wild migratory rainbow trout and Chinook salmon in the Great Lakes Basin (Fisheries Management Plan, NVCA, 2013).

As Simcoe County anticipates at least 667,000 people by 2031, it is likely that these indicators will only worsen. It should also be noted that degradation of the Nottawasaga Valley watershed has continued even with watershed and subwatershed plans in place for almost

20 years. It seems what is missing are rigid policies that better connect land use planning with water resource and natural heritage protection. To the SCGC, the Greenbelt is the best first step in putting these protections in place.



20 years. It seems what is missing are rigid policies that better connect land use planning with water resource and natural heritage protection. To the SCGC, the Greenbelt is the best first step in putting these protections in place.

**Clear Need for Consistent, Top Level Approach to Water Resource Preservation and Protection**

The current governance structure in Simcoe County almost guarantees that water policies will continue to be fragmented. For instance, lower tier municipalities have the authority over water and wastewater servicing – decisions that greatly impact water resources and watershed health. Ideally, these decisions should be made on a watershed basis, not just considering local implications of effluent discharge and water taking through an environmental assessment on a project-by-project basis.

Simcoe County Official Plan policies only exacerbate this problem as they encourage municipalities to share water and wastewater servicing if needed. This could result in connecting communities that span watersheds and allow water-strapped inland communities to grow outside of their capacity by connecting with lake-based communities. This has already been realized with the Collingwood/Alliston pipeline as well as recently constructed pipes between Alcona and Bradford. Considering that most of the lower-tier municipalities that are anticipating significant growth also have a water and/or wastewater servicing gap, we can expect more of these types of "solutions". All this is to say that there needs to be an overarching set of policies that apply to all municipalities and implement strong standards and consistent approaches. Local input is important, but water management goes beyond local political borders.

**In conclusion:**

Simcoe County is routinely considered a recreational haven due to its Georgian Bay beaches, Lake Simcoe, vast network of trails and forests, green spaces and unique blend of vibrant urban centres and rural vistas. Moreover, rich in prime farmland, Simcoe County

makes a significant contribution to the province's agricultural economy. Thus, the health of Simcoe County extends far beyond the residents to include cottagers, tourists, hunters, anglers, farmers and the industries that benefit from them.

Our concern is that, as Simcoe is slated to grow immensely, the watershed health indicators will only worsen. Most of our local governments and conservation authorities have finite financial and staffing capacities to properly prepare for and respond to the increasing growth pressures. We wonder how already stressed water resources will fare in the future without significant policy change. It is time to do something bold that will help shape the future of a region critical to the health of the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Expand the Greenbelt to include the entire County of Simcoe and supporting eco-systems.

*This article is adapted from a recent submission to Ontario Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Mauro. For more information, go to [www.simcoecountygreenbelt.ca](http://www.simcoecountygreenbelt.ca) and [www.greenbelt.ca](http://www.greenbelt.ca).*

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