

"Put a little back"

Nottawasaga River
Ontario, Canada

Nottawasaga Steelheaders

November 18, 2022

RE: Bill 23, Build More Homes Faster Act

Dear Premier:

I must start by saying that you have deeply disappointed me and many Ontarians.

By your recent actions in Bill 23, you have broken your promise once again as you have several times before regarding the Greenbelt. As such you have betrayed our trust by lying about your true commitment as our provincial leader.

What amazes me is that you somehow, through some innate God given powers, are able to replace 7,000+ critically sensitive Greenbelt acres with 9,000 acres of set aside lands without environmental and ecological assessment, in some weak gesture of equivalence. Why don't you use those 9,000 acres rather than sacrifice these important wetlands and Greenbelt lands? You do have other choices other than destroying the Greenbelt. There are already over 90,000 available acres of lands, many owned by developers, that are designated for development. These available lands, as demonstrated, will more than accommodate expected immigration levels, without harming our sensitive environment.

By your present actions, unfortunately you will never be held in high esteem of other Conservative premiers such as Bill Davis as a balanced builder, who kept his promises and valued our environment... not even close. Do not ever confuse your majority election win as a mandate to do whatever you wish without good governance. By your bullying approaches you have failed in that capacity.

Just as a note, the Conservation Authorities were put into place by a progressive thinking Conservative government under George Drew in 1946 to control flooding and erosion created by rampant unchecked destruction of lands during development growth. Seems at odds with what you are doing...or should we say more appropriately undoing.

You seem to think that the Conservation Authorities' responsibility is just flood control and that this is clear and simple as if some physical manipulation or structure can be put in place to ward off potential flood damage. By such myopic thinking, thinking, you place the welfare of many in jeopardy. Wetlands are a critical factor in preventing flooding. They are complex and often composite in their structure and interdependence. They have critical buffer zones, that by your actions in hand-cuffing the Conservation Authorities responsibilities seriously undermine their flood control abilities.

The conservation authorities play a very significant role in the preservation of the \$7 B Great Lakes Sport Fishery. The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority stream rehab projects over the past decades along with volunteer organizations such as the Nottawasaga Steelheaders, have been critical to this important fishery. The Nottawasaga River, from recent studies by the University of Western Ontario, contributes over 35% of Chinook salmon and wild steelhead to this fishery. Studies by the Nottawasaga River Conservation Authority have shown a decline in stream health due to land use change and intensification that place this important fishery in jeopardy. The Conservation Authority is working hard to reverse this.

The Mining Wetlands of the Nottawasaga River, like many watershed wetlands, play very important roles. They are in fact a complex living system of interconnected wetlands. To effectively manage their flood controlling capacity they must be addressed in full as a living system understanding the interdependent biodiversity within. And that is what the Nottawasaga Conservation Authority does. And healthy living wetlands are a natural filter removing harmful pollutants and nutrient loads allowing communities safe water consumption and recreational use such as Wasaga Beach, the largest fresh water recreational beach in the world. They also are critical flood controls for the many communities along and below including the Wasaga Beach, much of which exists in flood plains.

The Nottawasaga Steelheaders are a dedicated group of conservation minded anglers established in 1993 to help preserve the Nottawasaga River watershed, its fisheries and species for future generations. Over the past 30 years we have worked closely with the Nottawasaga River Conservation Authority, Ministry of Natural Resources, Nottawasaga Futures and many watershed communities, to rehabilitate and preserve the Nottawasaga River watershed. Over this time, we have undertaken hundreds of thousands of man hours and dollars of corrective and preservation measures. We have also undertaken numerous fisheries studies and fish lifts. Your actions in Bill 23 sadly are going to negate these many positive accomplishments.

Mr. Premiere please do the right thing for the much bigger picture and stop the irreversible destruction that will result from Bill 23. What are you going to leave our future generations with... sprawled concrete, subdivisions and highways, devoid of vital healthy ecology?

How will you be remembered?

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors.
We borrow it from our children"

Yours in conservation,

Gary Christie
Director, Nottawasaga Steelheaders
Richmond Hill, Ontario
L4C 6V2