



Mayor Robert Grossi
Georgina Civic Centre
26557 Civic Centre Road
R.R. #2 Keswick, Ontario
L4P 3G1

Dear Mr. Grossi and Councilors,

RE: North Gwillimbury Forest

On behalf of Ontario Nature, I am writing to urge your Council to protect the North Gwillimbury Forest and not to allow development to occur in this significant woodland.

Ontario Nature protects Ontario's wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. We represent over 140 member organizations and 30,000 members and supporters from across Ontario. Since 1931, Ontario Nature has been working to protect Ontario's rivers, forests, and wildlife in partnership with landowners, community groups, government and First Nations. We are committed to protecting southern Ontario's remaining wetlands and woodlands and we have led the charge to strengthen policy for their protection for many years.

We understand that discussions are underway between Regional staff and developer Metrus, which the Town has also been involved in, about potential changes to the York Region official plan that could facilitate development of a large subdivision on a Metrus-owned property. We are very concerned about what these discussions entail and what their impact will be on the Paradise Beach – Island Grove wetland complex. We believe that a provincially significant wetland is a very poor choice of location for a subdivision or even for the previously proposed mobile home park. Furthermore, we would expect that any decisions vis a vis changes to the Regional official plan will be shared publicly before being introduced to the Ontario Municipal Board in the interest of full transparency and in recognition of the high public interest in and concern for these lands.

Southern Ontario has lost more than 70% of its pre-settlement wetlands. The wetlands that remain are critical to protecting water supplies, filtering out water contaminants and providing a home to wetland-dependent species. That is why the province has strengthened protections for wetlands and why the Town of Georgina should be doing everything in its power to protect the Paradise Beach – Island Grove wetland area.



Since the original mobile home park development application was approved 24 years ago, the Lake Simcoe watershed has changed dramatically. At the same time, land-use planning has evolved to better reflect the ecological needs of the region and province. Recent legislation and policy, such as the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), Greenbelt Act and Plan, and Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan, spell out clear guidelines for protecting natural areas.

At the same time, the area's natural heritage values have also become better known and understood through initiatives such as the identification of Paradise Beach-Island Grove provincially significant wetland and the North Gwillimbury regionally significant forest. The originally planned development would offend these policies and designations, and any new subdivision would certainly contravene them. This includes section 2.1.3 (b) of the 2005 PPS, stating "Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E."

We support the work and efforts of the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance and call on the Town of Georgina to encourage the Regional Municipality of York to protect this important forest and the important ecological functions it plays to sustain human, animal and plant life in the region and province.

Yours truly,

Dr. Anne Bell
Conservation and Education Director
Ontario Nature

cc. Bill Fisch, Regional Chair