

Speaking Notes for Jack Gibbons, Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance

LSRCA Board Meeting, March 27, 2015

Madam Chair and members of the board, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today about your proposed new *Watershed Development Guidelines*.

I am Jack Gibbons from the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance. We were established in 2011 to preserve and protect the North Gwillimbury Forest (NGF).

The NGF is one of the 10 largest forests in the Lake Simcoe watershed. And it is more than 3 times larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park. It stretches all the way from the north end of Keswick to Jackson's Point in the Town of Georgina.

The NGF is not just a forest, it is also wetland. To be precise, 38% of the Forest's area is also wetland. Based on research conducted by the David Suzuki Foundation, we have calculated that the NGF's wetlands provide us with \$8.8 million of ecosystem services per year. That is, carbon

storage, water filtration, flood control, waste treatment, wildlife habitat and recreation. Over the next 100 years, the cumulative ecosystem benefits of the NGF's wetlands will be \$880 million.

So I am here today, on behalf of the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance, to support your proposal to prohibit the building of subdivisions on provincially significant wetlands.

And I am pleased to note that your proposal to prohibit the building of subdivisions on provincially significant wetlands is also supported by Ducks Unlimited, the David Suzuki Foundation and Ontario Nature.

You have also received a September 26, 2014 written submission from our lawyer Leo Longo of Aird & Berlis. According to Mr. Longo, you have the full legal authority, under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, to prohibit the building of subdivisions on provincially significant wetlands.

And I am also pleased to note that you have received no submissions that challenge or dispute Mr. Longo's legal analysis.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you that there are 10 conservation authorities in Central Ontario. At the present, all of these conservation authorities prohibit the building of subdivisions on provincially significant wetlands except the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. So, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, we request you to please approve your proposed new *Watershed Development Guidelines* which will prohibit the building of subdivisions on Lake Simcoe's provincially significant wetlands.

Thank you for your attention.