



March 29, 2018

To the Lake Simcoe Watershed Community:

Re: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Decision Regarding Maple Lake Estates

Recently the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (Conservation Authority) Board of Directors made a unanimous decision to approve a permit application from the DG Group for their 1073 unit development on the 500 acre Maple Lake Estates property in the Town of Georgina. Recognizing that this decision is not popular with some members of our community, we'd like to explain the Board's decision.

The Maple Lake Estates development has a long and complex history with municipal, regional and provincial planning approvals dating back over thirty years. The Maple Lake Estates development approval is recognized in all provincial planning legislation and policies approved to date, including the Greenbelt Act & Plan, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement. All planning approvals have been secured, establishing DG Group's right to develop the land.

LSRCA's role, to approve or deny a section 28 permit, occurs after planning approvals have been received and if the development falls within an area that we are responsible for regulating under the laws in the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

When a development is proposed, the planning process includes detailed public consultation. In the case of the Maple Lake Estates development, the planning process and public consultation took place many decades ago. The Section 28 permit process only includes consultation between the applicant and the Conservation Authority. As with all permit applications we receive, the Maple Lake Estates application was evaluated on its own facts and had to meet the criteria set out in the *Conservation Authorities Act*. This is the same criteria applied to all applications for a permit from the Conservation Authority, without exception.

In 2015, the Regional Municipality of York, Town of Georgina, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and DG Group, collectively supported a land swap option. The proposed land swap would have given DG Group the right to develop on their bordering property. In return, DG Group would have transferred the 500 acres of Maple Lake Estates land into public ownership - **increasing the Greenbelt in excess of 300 acres and saving the forest and wetland permanently.**

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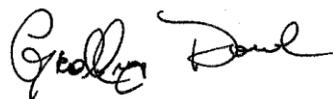
If approved, this solution would have also required DG Group's new development to be reviewed under all current planning laws and Conservation Authority policies. This option was aligned with Provincial policies and had support from many community members, but despite the substantial benefits, the Province did not approve the proposal. As a result, the Conservation Authority had to review the permit application for the original development.

Although we didn't obtain our preferred land swap option, we didn't abandon our effort to protect the watershed. A very important fact which can't be ignored - although a permit for the development was approved, it's conditional on DG Group transferring nearly 400 acres of land adjacent to the Maple Lake Estates property into public ownership. This is more than double the lands being developed so that the Conservation Authority and other partners can create future wetland, wildlife habitat and allow that land to naturally regenerate - creating one of the largest protected public tracts of land in northern York Region.

Throughout this process staff and Board members have remained objective and acted according to our mandate and the laws that govern the Conservation Authority. Throughout our 67-year history, we have made fact based, transparent decisions using fair and balanced principles founded on law. This decision was no different.

Together with our staff, Board members and many partners, we'll continue to work hard to protect and restore the environmental health and quality of Lake Simcoe and the entire watershed.

Yours sincerely,



Aurora Mayor Geoffrey Dawe
Chair



Michael Walters
Chief Administrative Officer