

**North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance
160 John Street, Suite 300
Toronto M5V 2E5
www.SaveNGForest.org**

July 13, 2016

VIA Email

Chairman Wayne Emmerson and Members of Council
Region of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Chairman Emmerson and Members of Council

Re: Amending the Town of Georgina's Official Plan to protect the Paradise Beach-Island Grove Provincially Significant Wetland

I am writing to ask the Region of York to amend the Town of Georgina's April 2016 Official Plan to prohibit development on the Maple Lake Estates (MLE) lands that are located on the Paradise Beach-Island Grove Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) in the heart of the North Gwillimbury Forest.

The North Gwillimbury Forest is one of the ten largest forests in the Lake Simcoe watershed. It is more than three times larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park and stretches all the way from the north end of Keswick to Jackson's Point.

Approximately 90% of the 500 acre MLE lands are located on the Paradise Beach-Island Grove PSW and/or on woodland protected by the Regional Official Plan.

According to Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, Georgina's Official Plan must be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), which prohibits development on all PSWs in southern Ontario. Unfortunately, the Town has failed to comply with its legal obligation to protect MLE's PSW. And under Section 27, the Georgina Plan must conform with the Regional Plan, which the Town has also failed to do.

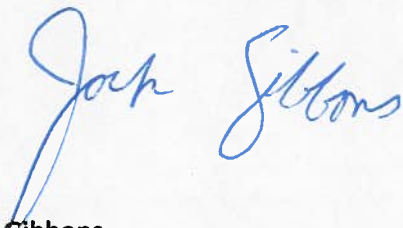
In 1988, approval was given for a 1,073-unit mobile home park on the MLE lands. In the 28 years since these approvals were granted, no development has taken place on these lands. If this development were to proceed today, it would destroy a PSW and split the North Gwillimbury Forest in two.

We believe the Town of Georgina has made a fundamental error in drafting an Official Plan that gives more weight to three-decade old planning approvals than to current provincial policy and the Regional Plan. We believe the Town's actions were informed by a mistaken belief that a "land swap" could be arranged for a parcel of prime farmlands within the Greenbelt Protected Countryside. The Province has now made it clear that this swap is not going to happen, meaning that it is the responsibility of the Region of York to amend the Town's Plan to bring it into compliance with the PPS and other provincial policies as well as its own Official Plan.

The North Gwillimbury Forest is an important regional asset, from both an economic and environmental perspective. There is no way that the current outdated development approvals for the MLE lands would ever be issued today. And there is no way that this site could be developed without harming important natural functions, including recharge, control and filtration of waters flowing into Lake Simcoe.

It is simple common sense to protect Provincially Significant Wetlands and Regionally protected woodlands, such as those found on the MLE lands. It is also the law.

Yours truly,



Jack Gibbons
Chair