



**Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy
Biennial Conference
Holiday Inn - Barrie
October 20, 2005 - Conference Notes**

**Save the Land...Save the Lake...Working Together for a
Great Lake**

One
Voice
Action
Plan

Opening Remarks

Councillor Virginia Hackson

-Vice Chair, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSEMS), provided opening remarks to the audience.

Councillor Hackson thanked our conference sponsors:

- Gold Level: Greenland International Consulting Ltd.
- Silver Level: CH2M Hill Canada Ltd.
- Bronze Level: Lura Consulting and Eco Medic

Councillor Hackson

- outlined the 15 years of history of the Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy (LSEMS)
- advised that the purpose of the conference was to develop a “*One Voice Action Plan*” for LSEMS which is SMART – Specific, Measurable, Realistic, and Time Bound. She also outlined the post conference commitment

Councillor Hackson introduced Joe Tascona, MPP, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr. Joe Tascona addressed the audience:

- Lake Simcoe is something very dear to our hearts;
- we require more public awareness of this in terms of urban sprawl;
- discussed the Open House hosted by the LSRCA which he attended, that brought more awareness to residents of Lake Simcoe;
- we need to ensure everyone is engaged to protect Lake Simcoe;
- our priority is to save Lake Simcoe;
- Lake Simcoe is a source of drinking water;
- Mr. Tascona extended a thank you to Peter Van Loan, MP, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who currently has a Private Member’s Bill in the legislature to protect Lake Simcoe from alien invasive species by means of mandatory ballast water regulations
- Mr. Tascona closed his remarks by reviewing a parliamentary certificate, which he presented to Councillor Virginia Hackson.

Councillor Hackson thanked Mr. Tascona and presented him with a gift.

SMART
Specific
Measurable
Realistic
Time Bound

More Public
Awareness

Ensuring
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Simcoe

It is important to
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Barrie is running
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Lake Simcoe is
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City of Barrie

“LSEMS is a rare and unique initiative”.

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Gord Miller

LSEMS Objective is to:

-improve water quality

-decrease phosphorus

-restore the self-sustaining fishery

-protect the natural features

The LSEMS Program is working

as supported by scientific data

New Challenges

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-exploding urban growth
-invasive species
-McNabb drain
-Maskinonge wetland complex
-decoupling under renewed intense

Councillor Hackson introduced Mayor Rob Hamilton, City of Barrie.

Mayor Hamilton addressed the audience:

- the Mayor welcomed everyone to the conference;
- He spoke to his commitment to the environment and Lake Simcoe;
- He has lived on Lake Simcoe for two years;
- growth is being addressed with the “Places to Grow” and “Assimilative Capacity Studies”;
- it is important to determine if the lake can handle the growth;
- Barrie is running out of land. This is a very complex and sensitive Issue and time;
- Many decisions need to be made;
- Lake Simcoe is essential to the City of Barrie;
- The Mayor extended best wishes for a good conference and thanked the LSEMS partners for hosting this conference in the City of Barrie
- Mayor Hamilton announced that LSEMS can count on the City of Barrie who are very committed to the efforts of LSEMS.

Councillor Hackson thanked Mayor Hamilton.

Gayle Wood

-CAO of the LSRCA and Chair of the LSEMS Steering Committee addressed the audience

-introduced Mr. Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Mr. Gord Miller addressed the audience:

- Mr. Miller presented from both the provincial and personal perspective; LSEMS is a rare and unique initiative;
- Lake Simcoe is a rare and important lake – in the centre of the Province;
- the LSEMS objective is to improve water quality, decrease phosphorus, restore the self-sustaining fishery, and protect the natural features;
- LSEMS is celebrating fifteen years of efforts;
- the Lake is suffering from eutrophication;
- recommended innovative measures to reduce phosphorus;
- he spoke to an MOE paper regarding water chemistry, advising that the phosphorus loads are getting better – we will get better if we continue to work on it - Oxygen levels in the lake are getting better – this is excellent for the lake trout – we can look forward to self-sustaining lake trout in Lake Simcoe;
- The LSEMS program is working – we have the scientific data that it is working – this is a great investment;
- LSEMS has decoupled the economic growth from the environmental deterioration;
- LSEMS is a very important achievement – a message the province can learn from;

“The
ultimate test
of a moral
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children”

...Dietrich
Bonhoeffer

- new challenges: for example, exploding urban growth; invasive species; McNabb drain, Maskinonge wetland complex; we must continue to decouple under renewed intense pressures;
- the Assimilative Capacity Study is a good beginning to start to scientifically address Total Maximum Daily Loads, Phosphorus Trading, etc.

In Summary:

- we have come a long way in improving Lake Simcoe;
- the eco system is better now than it was 15 years ago;
- work has been done in a credible way;
- it is critical that you continue to remain credible;
- LSEMS is still leading the Province – because you have the most at stake
- Mr. Miller extended best wishes for great success and advised that many people wish you success including the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

Question & Answer period for the Commissioner
- facilitated by Diane Humeniuk

Q Can the declining phosphorus be related to the York-Durham project?

A The Commissioner suggested the reduction is related to many areas including agricultural/urban projects throughout the watershed.

Q The phosphorus loading number has always been 104 tonnes annually – what is it today regarding the total load?

A We do not have that information – however we expect it will be addressed during the conference.

Q The Township of Uxbridge has an extensive program to remove phosphorus from urban runoff – costing approximately \$3,000-\$4,000/kilo to remove the phosphorus per year. Phosphorus Trading is very interesting to Uxbridge – Do you know of anyone currently using this process?

A The South Nation Conservation Authority is currently doing some phosphorus trading. There are other examples in the Grand River basin as well. Some pilot projects have shown some promise.

Q Residents of Cooks Bay can tell from a visual perspective that the “rock bottom” was hit in the 90’s. Do you think that the total phosphorus is the best indicator of total environmental risk?

A Lake trout is the indicator that LSEMS has adopted. Phosphorus is a practical indicator that MOE uses because it is a nutrient. There are two examples close to home of the advantages of removing phosphorus from lakes; Little Otter Lake, Parry Sound and Gravenhurst Bay. Water clarity was improved in both lakes with the removal of phosphorus.

Q When will the Commissioner’s Annual Report be issued?

A The report will be released soon.

Q What do you intend to accomplish with your report?

A The report will identify issues that need to be addressed by the Legislative Assembly. The Commissioner’s role is to identify what is wrong and what needs the attention of the legislature.

“The ultimate test of a moral society is what kind of world it leaves to its children” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Councillor Virginia Hackson thanked Mr. Miller and presented him with a gift.

Celebrating 15 Years of LSEMS

Diane Humeniuk introduced the panel of:

- **Gayle Wood,** - Chair, LSEMS Steering Committee,
- **Wolfgang Scheider** - Manager, Biomonitoring Section,
Ministry of the Environment
- **Mike Walters** - Director, Watershed Management,
LSRCA.

Gayle, Wolf and Mike provided presentations regarding LSEMS and the updated phosphorus loads from 1998 to 2004.

Diane Humeniuk introduced Neil Hutchinson, Senior Aquatic Specialist & Principal Manager, Gartner Lee Ltd

Neil Hutchinson provided comments:

- phosphorus loadings are declining – this is on track to recovery;
- the target of maintaining 75 tonnes annually, which was established 15 years ago will restore the cold water fishery;
- we need to re-examine the LSEMS targets;

- **There are four objectives to LSEMS:**
 - restoring a self sustaining coldwater fishery
 - improving water quality
 - reducing phosphorus loads to Lake Simcoe
 - protecting natural heritage features and functions

**A Question & Answer period
- facilitated by Neil Hutchinson**

Q Zebra Mussels are invasive; however they are also reducing the phosphorus levels. Are they good or bad?

A The downward trend of the phosphorus loads began before the zebra mussels got here.

The improvements in the water quality also started before the zebra mussels.

Zebra mussels are intruders and they are damaging because:

- they clog the water intake pipes
- interrupt fish spawning,

However they have some beneficial aspects:

- they filter particles from the water
- remove the phytoplankton from the water
- reduce phosphorus in Lake Simcoe

Q We have beautiful beaches around Lake Simcoe but they often can be closed. Can laws be altered as they relate to Canada Geese?

A At the present time some things can be done to address the Canada Geese. Putting up fences are not totally effective and will not guarantee results. Natural vegetation along the shoreline can be effective.

Q Tell us why we did not see new data being reported sooner. Why has it not been released sooner than 1998?

A In 2005 the LSEMS report on water quality loading data has not yet been made public as it is in the process of being finalized. We would like to get this done more frequently than 6 years. The report will be available on the LSEMS web site once it is finalized.

Q The data you quoted for the East and West Holland River seem to be out of scale from other data we have heard?

A Results come from previous reports where loadings were at higher levels than they are today. The Holland River still remains the most polluted watercourse to Lake Simcoe.

We will be focusing on that for the total loading and continuing to complete remedial projects for this river.

Comment

I was very interested in the comment that there has been a decoupling of economy and environmental benefits.

I would like to turn that around which follows as a result of my thinking about an article in the Economist regarding linking development with environmental benefits.

The importance of combining development with environmental benefits can come from this coupling. I would like to reverse that and say there is a need to couple and not decouple the economy and the environment.

Q Two years ago the Maskinonge River dried up and is currently not flowing. Is too much water being pumped through the aquifers?

A The Conservation Authority, in cooperation with the municipalities, are undertaking watershed planning within York Region.

Part of the provincial requirement when undertaking this plan, is to increase our understanding of the water balance. The information will be published soon.

Gayle Wood thanked the panel participants for hosting the Question and Answer period.

Current Watershed Initiatives

Diane Humeniuk introduced:

- **Bruce Singbush** - Manager, Planning Projects, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
- **Rob Baldwin** - Manager, Watershed Science, LSRCA,
- **Charley Worte** - Manager, Source Water Protection, Conservation Ontario.

The group provided presentations on:

- the Provincial Intergovernmental Action Plan (IGAP),
- Lake Simcoe/Nottawasaga Assimilative Capacity Studies (ACS),
- Source Water Protection Planning (SWPP).

Claude Lafrance,

- Manager, Technical Support Section, Ministry of the Environment, thanked the panel participants for their presentations.

12:30- 1:30 – Lunch

Following the lunch break, the following Case Study Sessions were held.

Case Studies

Watershed Management Strategies

Presentations were provided by:

- **Randy French** - Principal, French Planning Services,
- **Neil Hutchinson** - Senior Aquatic Specialist & Principal Manager, Gartner Lee Ltd.,
- **Gary Wilkins** - Humber Water Specialist, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority.

- **Facilitator**
Anne Neary - Manager Technical Support - Ministry of the Environment facilitated the Session
- **Session Scribe**
Sandra Morley - Administrative Assistant, LSRCA.

Please see attached Q/A document regarding this session.

Science to Support Restoration & Protection

Presentations were provided by:

- **Dr. Gertrud Nürnberg** - Head of Freshwater Research,
- **Dr. David O. Evans** - Senior Research Scientist, Ministry of Natural Resources,
- **Mark Palmer** - President, Greenland International Consulting Ltd.,
- **Dr. Barry Evans** - Pennsylvania State University.

- **Facilitator**
D. Gayle Wood - CAO, LSRCA & Chair, LSEMS Steering

Committee facilitated the Session

- **Session Scribe**
Gina Casey -Executive Assistant, LSRCA.

Please see attached Q/A document regarding this session.

Restoration Initiatives

Presentations were provided by:

- **Keith Sherman** - Coordinator, Severn Sound Environmental Association
- **Mike Walters** - Director, Watershed Management, LSRCA,
- **Mike Williams** - Conservation Specialist, Ducks Unlimited Canada

- **Facilitator**
Deb Styles - Ministry of Natural Resources facilitated this Session

- **Session Scribe**
Pamela Dennis - Watershed Planning Technician

Please see attached Q/A document regarding this session.

Day 1 Adjourned