

2013 Durham Environmental Awards:
Letter of Support for Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water

Since the late 1990's, Earthroots and STORM Coalition have played a key role in advocating for strong protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine by working with conservation groups, residents, scientists and politicians to ensure that the Moraine's hydrological integrity is maintained. Despite the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) coming into effect in 2002, activities that pose threats to the Moraine's vital groundwater and compromise the effectiveness of the Plan are still taking place. These activities are a result of regulatory loopholes and deficiencies that are not captured by the ORMCP.

Earthroots reputation as an effective advocacy organization would not be what it is without the dedicated, passionate, and intelligent people from different communities contacting us, with concerns about developments or land uses that have the potential to cause irreparable strain on environmental features.

The way that we found out about the emerging issue of commercial fill on the Moraine (and in a broader sense, all of Ontario) was through Carmela Marshall and Ian McLaurin. Their persistence in explaining the complexity of the issue to Earthroots and STORM, their diligence in getting us up to speed about the Lakeridge Road site, and their willingness to work with us in a reciprocal way, was both unique and exemplary. The way that the residents formed an effective volunteer based organization so efficiently was inspiring. Furthermore, after getting to know the residents who formed LCCW, it quickly became evident that their efforts were not based on NIMBYism. This was about citizen engagement, our rights being respected, and environmental stewardship.

The roots of LCCW were grounded in an awareness campaign, aimed at finding out facts and getting to the bottom of the intricately layered case surrounding Lakeridge Rd. in Scugog. As the dedicated volunteers at LCCW delved further into the issue, it seamlessly turned into a well orchestrated movement that precipitated a groundswell of public support: citizens became actively engaged, attended town hall meetings, asking critical questions of all levels of government.

LCCW personifies the importance and effectiveness of grassroots advocacy. While Earthroots has 15,000 supporters, we would not be able to do stay on top of the issues, monitor government policy/implementation, or industry compliance, if it wasn't for groups like LCCW. Their diligence and perseverance inspired a lot of other citizens to come out and question the nature of commercial fill operations in their respective communities. This point is imperative to emphasize. When the dumping of fill on Lakeridge Road ceased, LCCW did not simply celebrate this as a victory, and drop the campaign and walk away. In fact, what they did was act as both a facilitator and conduit, connecting other citizens groups with each other, and disseminating information to these groups, providing them with resources and tools to become more informed about the issue of fill, and offering assistance. They have also made deputations in various municipalities in Southern Ontario, and played a crucial role in advocating several municipalities to develop comprehensive fill bylaws.

This role that LCCW adopted provided immeasurable benefits to citizens of Ontario and to the

Environmental non-profit movement. It also exemplified their passion for helping to protect Ontario's vulnerable watersheds, and this passion extended beyond the features that sustain their community.

LCCW's effectiveness could be attributed to the balanced, realistic approach they took in addressing the issue of commercial fill. They never painted things in black and white: they were clear and direct about their concerns. This was NOT about being against commercial fill (it is a legitimate and necessary business): rather, this was about a lack of oversight, a lack of monitoring, and an emerging issue that is slipping between the legislative cracks.

While commercial fill, and untested materials impacting our watersheds, is growing, and is of growing concern to Earthroots and STORM, I can say, on behalf of both organizations, that working with LCCW, has been an extraordinary experience. We look forward to this relationship evolving, and to keep advocating for changes to policy that are integral to tackling this complex issue.

LCCW is a volunteer based organization, who put in a great deal of time and energy to raising awareness, and pushing for greater transparency, on an issue that is of concern for residents of Ontario. I strongly endorse LCCW to be a perfect candidate for the Durham Environmental Awards.

Sincerely,

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