



## ESCARPMENT CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

January 19, 2023

Town of The Blue Mountains Council  
ATTN: Clerk  
32 Mill Street, Box 310  
Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

Sent via email to: Corrina Giles, Clerk

RE: Item G.2.1 Councillor Maxwell Notice of Motion Re Protection of Green Space

Dear Mayor Matrosovs and Council,

My name is George Knowles and I live on a working farm in the Town of Blue Mountains.

I am also a volunteer Director on the Board of the Escarpment Corridor Alliance. I am here to express the Escarpment Corridor Alliance's (ECA) support for Councillor Maxwell's proposal to increase the collaboration between stakeholders to protect our environment.

As you know, the ECA is a coalition of local residents, businesses, and organizations who are alarmed by rapid development in our region and ongoing plans to turn key parts of the brow and prominent slopes of the Niagara Escarpment's most popular outdoor areas into mega-developments.

The ECA was started only a year ago, but we have been approached by many different organizations in the area that share our concerns, so we gathered in our barn last summer with 12 organizations representing interests from protecting public lands in Talisman, to cycling clubs to people concerned about protecting our fresh water fisheries. While these 12 groups represent thousands of local residents, we also have over 20,000 signatories to our petition seeking protection for our area.

You will recall that during the municipal election campaign we also asked candidates to sign our Environmental Leadership Pledge, and our supporters were very pleased that the majority of Councillors in the Town of Blue Mountains signed this pledge.

In recent weeks Bill 23 has woken up many Ontarians to the threat to our natural spaces posed by unending development. Our ECA President Bruce Harbinson has pointed out that we Ontarians have all just got a reminder that a so-called protected areas like the Greenbelt can be taken away with an act by government, so we need to protect our own area.

In recent months, people around the world have been woken up to the erratic and unpredictable nature of weather, when the climate is changing. In California a drought has turned into severe rains and disastrous flooding. In Europe, many alpine ski resorts aren't fully open yet because they don't have enough snow.

And our area? One of the important economic drivers of our area is tourism and that starts with the seven ski hills stretching from Beaver Valley up through Georgian Peaks, Alpine, Craigleith and of course the largest ski hill and resort right here in the Blue Mountains. None of the ski areas are fully open yet.



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So we all realize there is a global climate crisis. We can't solve all the problems in California or in Europe, But It's up to us to do what we can, where we are, right here, right now, in the Town of Blue Mountains. And we know that nature doesn't pay attention to political boundaries, so we need to work in concert with Grey Highlands and Clearview. We need to think globally and act locally. Councillor Maxwell's motion is an opportunity to take action, right here, at home.

Over the past year, our organization has called on the region's municipalities to stop inappropriate developments, including major projects which would replace critical natural features with mini cities.

In The Blue Mountains, the proposed development of the Castle Glen Forest would require clear cutting that would threaten over 1,500 acres of forest, headwaters of two cold water fisheries and ecologically-sensitive wetlands, permanently damaging the habitats of flora and fauna.

This project received its initial approvals over 50 years ago and would struggle to get approvals in today's legislative and regulatory regime. Council must critically examine this proposal through a sustainability lens and do their best to conserve the entirety of the Castle Glen Forest. We believe that enacting Councillor Maxwell's motion and creating a process for collaboration with neighbouring municipal and regional councils and other stakeholders is an important first step.

Environmental matters are too interconnected to maintain strict boundaries between our communities. What happens in Clearview matters to Collingwood. What happens in the Blue Mountains matters to Grey Highlands. Our region is made up of many small communities that can become much stronger by supporting each other. Supporting Councillor Maxwell's motion is an opportunity for you as our elected officials to provide strong leadership on the crucial need to protect the environment.

We believe that Councillor Maxwell's idea is a strong proposal to protect the environment and we urge you to support it on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Thank you for your attention this matter.

Sincerely,

George Knowles , Director  
Escarpment Corridor Alliance