Submission by Nature Barrie on Growing the Greenbelt – April 19, 2021. EBR # 019-3136

Nature Barrie has reviewed and strongly supports the submissions made through the EBR posting on this matter by Ontario Nature, Environmental Defence, the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition, the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition and the Ontario Headwaters Institute.

The growing worldwide and well-known impacts of Climate Change have been thoroughly outlined in the successively more dire reports of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The ongoing dramatic Decline in Biodiversity and the Loss of Threatened and Endangered Species have been well-documented in the ‘Addendum: Summary for Policymakers’ of the “Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services’ prepared for the United Nations in 2019. (Link attached)

Listed below are but a small part of the Key Messages in this UN Report, but we believe that they deserve restating in support of expansion of the Greenbelt to include all of Simcoe County. All of the recommendations of the UN report are important and relevant to expansion of the Greenbelt, but we particularly draw your attention to the following:

**“A. Nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide.**

**A1 Nature is essential for human existence and good quality of life. Most of nature’s contributions to people are not fully replaceable, and some are irreplaceable.**

**A2 Nature’s contributions to people are often distributed unequally across space and time and among different segments of society. There are often trade-offs in the production and use of nature’s contributions.**

**A3 Since 1970, trends in agricultural production, fish harvest, bioenergy production and harvest of materials have increased, but 14 of the 18 categories of contributions of nature that were assessed, mostly regulating and non-material contributions, have declined.**

**A4 Nature across most of the globe has now been significantly altered by multiple human drivers, with the great majority of indicators of ecosystems and biodiversity showing rapid decline.**

**A5 Human actions threaten more species with global extinction now than ever before.**

**A6 Globally, local varieties and breeds of domesticated plants and animals are disappearing. This loss of diversity, including genetic diversity, poses a serious risk to global food security by undermining the resilience of many agricultural systems to threats such as pests, pathogens and climate change.**

**A7 Biological communities are becoming more similar to each other in both managed and unmanaged systems within and across regions. This human-caused process leads to losses of local biodiversity, including endemic species, ecosystem functions and nature’s contributions to people.**

**A8 Human-induced changes are creating conditions for fast biological evolution - so rapid that its effects can be seen in only a few years or even more quickly. The consequences can be positive or negative for biodiversity and ecosystems, but can create uncertainty about the sustainability of species, ecosystem functions and the delivery of nature’s contributions to people.** Understanding and monitoring these biological evolutionary changes is as important for informed policy decisions as it is in cases of ecological change. Sustainable management strategies then can be designed to influence evolutionary trajectories so as to protect vulnerable species and reduce the impact of unwanted species (such as weeds, pests or pathogens). The widespread declines in geographic distribution and population sizes of many species make clear that, although evolutionary adaptation to human-caused drivers can be rapid, it has often not been sufficient to mitigate them fully.”

Nature Barrie believes that the Greenbelt needs to grow through Simcoe County to protect natural heritage corridors from southern Simcoe County to Muskoka and Georgian Bay and beyond. These corridors should link the Nottawasaga River and its tributaries from the Niagara Escarpment to the Minesing Wetlands to Georgian Bay, connecting to the Copeland Forest and on to the Coldwater and Sturgeon Rivers, Hog Creek and Matchedash Bay, as well as the Wye River corridor to Tiny Marsh and Wye Marsh. The Matchedash Wildlands up to the Severn River are another important natural area that forms a bridge to the natural landscape north, west and east through Muskoka, Parry Sound and Kawartha Lakes. Better protection from overdevelopment in the watersheds of Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching on the east side of Simcoe County is yet another key component to preserving this natural heritage network. And we need to work with the First Nations communities in our area to understand and develop new and better ways to accomplish these goals, well-informed by their traditional knowledge and consent.

These large landscape corridors are critical for the survival of threatened and endangered species (both identified and yet-to-be-identified) and maintaining biodiversity of plant and animal species as Climate Change continues to change existing habitat conditions for our native species.

**The COVID19 Pandemic has clearly shown how dependant our human species is on being able to connect with natural areas for our psychological health and well-being!**

***The call is clear and the time for serious action is now!***