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## A Vision for Simcoe County, April 2013

### Preamble:

Currently, planning in Simcoe County, Barrie and Orillia is undertaken to accommodate projected development and population growth. There is no evaluation of whether the growth will be beneficial or harmful to the people of the county.

In contrast, AWARE Simcoe takes the position that all planning should consist of a series of steps aimed at achieving defined objectives, and that these objectives should be discussed and agreed upon by the community. Discussion of objectives, policies and plans should recognize that physical, social and economic environments are changing, and that we cannot assume continuation of the conditions in which population and economic growth have occurred in recent decades.

### AWARE Simcoe Vision Statement:

Simcoe County, including the cities of Barrie and Orillia, will become a community of communities that will permanently sustain the social and physical well-being of all residents.

### AWARE Simcoe Mission Statement:

AWARE Simcoe is a citizens’ group that works to protect water, the environment and health through transparency and accountability in government.

### Goals

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The first step towards attaining these goals is to recognize that human beings are overtaxing the earth’s renewable resources, as well as rapidly depleting most of the non-renewable resources that support our complex global societies. Consequently, we need to explore and develop new economic strategies which are not based on endless growth.

The second step is to anticipate the potential consequences of population increase and resource decline, and adopt policies that can best achieve the AWARE Simcoe vision and goals.

## Goal 1: A Healthy Environment

### Issue:

By now surely everyone in Canada understands the basics of the ecological functions of the planet and that humanity is dependent on these ecological functions to produce the oxygen we breath, the clean water we drink, the food we eat and the materials required to house ourselves. What we don't seem to comprehend, at least collectively, is that if humanity over-uses these essentials to life, then the earth will lose the ability to provide them.



The Carrying Capacity Network explains the issue this way: “In fact, the criterion for determining whether a region is overpopulated is not land area, but carrying capacity.

“Carrying capacity refers to the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits, and without degrading the natural social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations.

“The effects of unfettered population growth drastically reduce the carrying capacity.....”

The World Wildlife Foundation’s Canadian Living Planet Report 2007 states that “From 1961 to 2003, the average Canadian’s Footprint grew from 4.6 to 7.6 global hectares per person. That’s approximately 3.5 times greater than the 2003 global average (2.2 gha). Even more importantly, it’s 4.3 times greater than the amount of biocapacity that the Earth can provide for each person (1.8 gha). “

**The issue is whether Simcoe County is living within the carrying capacity of the land. How large a population can Simcoe County support?**

### Objectives:

- That Simcoe County maintain a healthy environment,
- That our community remains as viable and prosperous in the very long-term (i.e. 7 generations) as we are today, and
- That Simcoe County plans communities that are sustainable, preserving our resources and natural heritage for future generations.

## **Discussion:**

### **Limited Renewable Resources**

#### Groundwater

A large portion of Simcoe County residents depend on groundwater wells for their water needs. If we withdraw more groundwater than is being replaced each year, then eventually the groundwater will be depleted. Groundwater also forms the base flow for most of our streams and rivers locally.

Hard surfacing the landscape prevents water from infiltrating the soil and replenishing groundwater. The greater the area of concrete and asphalt development, the less replenishment of groundwater takes place.

Contamination leaching into the groundwater from landfills or other sources renders it undrinkable and virtually unusable to humans, animals and vegetation for decades and even centuries.

#### Surface water

Many communities in Simcoe County depend on surface water to supply all their water needs. If we use, waste or divert more water than is being replaced into the rivers and lakes then we will eventually run out of water. Contaminated surface water often becomes unusable or seriously degraded. Lake Simcoe is a good example how a large body of water can be degraded and will require extraordinary actions to rehabilitate it.

#### Food Land

Although agricultural productivity has increased enormously in the last couple of centuries, we cannot grow any food on land that is built on or paved over. Loss of food land is discussed under Goal #2.

#### Forests

The trees in our forests can only grow at a certain rate. When we cut trees faster than they are replaced we soon run out of trees and forest products.

### **Non-Renewable Resources**

#### Aggregate

We use huge amounts of gravel and limestone aggregates in road and building construction. These areas of gravel deposits and, in some cases limestone, also serve as recharge areas replenishing the groundwater supplying our wells and streams with fresh water. The cavities left behind by large pit and quarry operations can change the recharge and water purifying functions once performed by the removed aggregate material. Base flow to streams can also be affected.

An aggregate source like the Oro Moraine could disappear over time if taken to provide materials for ever widening roads and concrete for buildings.

#### Land Area

While the land area in southern Ontario once seemed vast, we only need to look at how much land around Toronto and other large urban areas has been paved over in the last sixty years to quickly realize space is actually limited.

#### Oil and fossil fuels

While not resources of Simcoe County, oil and gas supplies are limited. The concept of peak oil is universally accepted. The quantities available to mankind are limited, so we all must do our part to preserve them.

## **Waste Management**

Disposal of our waste, whether biological or constructed, was relatively easy until a few decades ago. Today our air, water and soil systems can no longer assimilate human waste as fast as our expanding population and increasingly consumptive society produces it. However, we now have the technology to become a society that produces no waste products, i.e. zero waste.

Therefore, Simcoe County must become a zero waste municipality where “waste” becomes an obsolete word replaced by “resource.” Nothing is landfilled or incinerated. All unwanted resource materials are returned to the resource stream as part of the product life cycle and financed by the original cost of producing the product.

## **Ecological Functions and Natural Heritage**

The various natural systems for recycling the essential elements for life (oxygen, water, elements such as carbon and hydrogen, nutrients, etc.) have been operating for millennia. These complex and intricate natural systems are part of our natural heritage and include groundwater regeneration, wetlands, streams and lakes, forests, alvars, grasslands and wildlife corridors. In order for these systems to function effectively a wide variety (biodiversity) of both plant and animal species is necessary.

Our expanding population, urban sprawl and invasive species interfere with and destroy our natural heritage systems and reduce biodiversity.

To quote the Carrying Capacity Network again - “As the environment is degraded, carrying capacity actually shrinks, leaving the environment no longer able to support even the number of people who could formerly have lived in the area on a sustainable basis. No population can live beyond the environment's carrying capacity for very long.”

## **Strategies:**

- *Determine the rate of renewal for each renewable resource and only harvest at or below that rate.*
- *Ensure renewable resources from outside Simcoe County that foster economic prosperity are harvested sustainably at their origin.*
- *Protect non-renewable resources, such as aggregate, within Simcoe County. Use them only in such a manner as to preserve their ecological functions.*
- *Continuously reuse non-renewable resources from outside Simcoe County, like oil based products and metals, so the need for new extraction is significantly reduced.*
- *Produce no waste. Return all organic and inorganic products to the resource stream for reuse.*
- *Limit growth to a population stabilized at a level that falls within the carrying capacity of the natural ecological systems of the County. Population growth limits can be achieved through limitations on new housing developments. In order to determine the maximum population for Simcoe County, studies must be undertaken similar to, but more inclusive than, the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga River Assimilative Capacity Study.*
- *Above all else, protect the natural heritage and ecological functions required to maintain a healthy environment. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan sets a new standard for watershed management and should be expanded to include all of Simcoe County.*

## **Summary**

The long-term prosperity of Simcoe County depends on the responsible use of our natural renewable and non-renewable resources and the protection of our natural heritage and land's ecological functions. Key resources such as water, agricultural land and forest products and the ecological functions of the land must be maintained in order for the current and future residents of the County, and the world, to survive and prosper. The population of Simcoe County must not exceed the capacity of the land to sustain it.

## **Goal 2: Agricultural Prosperity**

### **Issue:**

The world's population is rising at an exponential rate while the areas considered valuable for agriculture are being lost permanently to urban development, hydro-electric projects, large solar electric generating facilities and transportation networks.

Planners and politicians, in this onslaught of development, need to understand the consequences of the loss of food producing land and make holistic decisions that protect farmland. (See loss of farmland data in box below)

There are two key definitions that have to be understood as a basis for the planning of a municipality, in concert with guidelines that have been developed by the Province.

In 1987 the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations defined sustainability as follows; "Sustainable development must meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, recognizing in particular, the essential needs of the world's poor and limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

Standards Australia defines Net Benefit as any change that "must have an overall positive impact in relative affected communities."

### **Objectives:**

- That food producers have continuous use of rural agricultural land to produce the quality food that is needed to feed Ontarians and the world.
- That food producers receive fair compensation for their labour, assets and risk. The agricultural enterprise is a long-term commitment that is willingly accepted, if there is reward.

### **Discussion:**

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 as well as proposed updates to that Policy, clearly shows that prime agricultural lands have to be protected. AWARE Simcoe asserts that if the local areas of urban use have a wish to expand their existing boundaries, then a net benefit study would be required by the municipality, reporting to the Province, to show how losing specific agricultural land is preferable, not only locally, but to a wider community.

Currently the agricultural sector is recognized by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Provincial government as the number one value-added sector in the Province of Ontario. From the prime producer, to seed, fertilizer, fuel, machinery, automotive suppliers, processors to the labour, insurance, banking institutions and many other businesses, an agricultural enterprise spans a commanding financial footprint on the province.

When the public is exposed to the quality food, that is grown locally, there develops a shared interest in the land, between the farmer or rancher, local processors, local suppliers and the resident. The community is galvanized as a healthier whole because of our common need to eat.

In the past, the cultural spread between urbanites and their rural cousins was less than we currently witness. Now many folks from the cities are unaware of the origin of the food they purchase. Many urban visitors to farms are excited about the proximity of the quality food that is grown by their rural neighbours. Many then form bonds with the farmer/rancher, which benefits both that supplier and the purchaser. A true appreciation of the farm business would then be developed.

In many jurisdictions, small-scale food production is allowed in an urban setting. Municipal bylaws must be reviewed and altered to permit urban residents to grow their own small animals and poultry for their own consumption. This practice would be allowed through permits, issued as a case by case management.

Gleaning is the practice of shared input for shared harvest. Those with land could share with a gardener and the produce could be distributed as decided by the parties.



The modern successful farmer will use all the tools available to him/her to bring more efficiency to the operation. Old methods of environmental conservation play a large role in the decision making, since success is based on clean water, soil and air. The farmer, who understands the cycles, is the most important steward of the land.

The farmer is quick to utilize modern technology, specific education, consultants and banking services to enhance the operation. In order to do all this for the operation the farmer must have confidence in long range stability, not only in the market and in regulations, but in municipal planning. There must be minimal urban-rural conflict in this planning.

Many farmers who are approaching retirement are often in anguish to discover that they have to sell the farm, the constant companion that he/she has had for life. The pain is enhanced when the possibility of selling to a developer will solve any lingering financial issues, but the land will die.

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) should differentiate rural land as actively farmed from land that is held for long periods on speculation of development. For genuine farm operations, the rate should be low to help with the farmer's production of food. For land held by speculators and rented to farmers, and later approved for development, the developer should be retroactively charged the rate that is appropriate for developable land.

Ontario Farmland Trust and other such organizations can help carry farmers' wishes to keep their land in food production, in perpetuity, by means of an agricultural conservation easement. This easement would be attached to the deed of the land, acting not only as a will, but as a means of keeping the farm in food production. The farm can be sold to anyone, but the buyer would have to respect the easement.

Only 5% of Canada's land area is suitable for growing food.

On a clear day half of the best agricultural land in Canada can be seen from the top of Toronto's CN Tower.

16% of Class 1 agricultural land in the GTA and Hamilton area was lost to urban encroachment between 1995 and 2001.

In the Whitebelt area surrounding the Golden Horseshoe, the Province approved development of 52,000 hectares of land before new sprawl control policies came into effect, and municipalities in the area propose to develop another 10,000 hectares.

David Suzuki Foundation

If current "business-as-usual" patterns of growth continue, an additional 260,000 acres (1,070 km<sup>2</sup>) of rural land will be urbanized by 2031, an area that is almost double the size of the City of Toronto.

Approximately 92% of this is classified as prime agricultural land.

(Neptis Foundation, 2002).

### Strategies:

- *Protect food producing agricultural land, in accordance with the existing Provincial Policy Statement and any subsequent updates. Policies have to go further to preserve all areas of our existing farmland as permanent food-producing lands.*
- *Encourage the implementation of agricultural conservation easements to preserve farmland.*
- *Promote local food initiatives to involve the entire community.*
- *Encourage urban food production and gleaning.*
- *Encourage the practice of agricultural tourism to help educate and entertain a broad spectrum of the population.*
- *Further reduce taxes for active food producing land to benefit the farmer/rancher.*
- *Require a net benefit study by the municipality, reporting to the Province, to prove that the loss of any agricultural land is beneficial, not only locally, but also to the wider community.*
- *Engage the general population in all major decisions.*

### Summary:

As much as the Brundtland Commission definition on Sustainability deals with development, one would have to understand that agricultural sustainability and prosperity are paramount to our planning.

For the long-term prosperity of farming for food production, the municipality must only allow development that is proven for the net benefit of all. Reacting to the speculators' demands only benefits the speculators.

Ontario was developed by generations of farmers who have amassed huge operating assets and are still producing high quality food for local and export purposes. Loss of farmers is a loss of heritage, knowledge, expertise and an increased dependence on others to feed us, but the loss of farmland is permanent.

Open and transparent discussions between the elected councils and the general population have to include meaningful town hall meetings, referenda and other means to keep the citizens involved. Public officials have to be able to display accountability at all times.

Simcoe County, which is largely rural, can set impressive examples in planning if a holistic view is taken in the long-term planning process with contributions by the citizens of the County.

### **Goal 3: Development that is a Net Benefit to the Community**

#### **Issue:**

Planning has been based on population growth forecasts from higher levels of government and their consultants, rather than by County driven initiatives. Planning has been reactive rather than pro-active. Results have been urban sprawl, longer commutes, lack of local jobs, destruction of the character of existing communities, increased taxes and huge debt burdens that are unsustainable. Simcoe County has become the bedroom of the GTA rather than a long-term well planned sustainable region.

#### **Objectives:**

- That the need for any population growth be proven to be required in communities before any new development is permitted.
- That all population increases be directed to primary settlement areas and other established settlement areas with existing infrastructure.
- That lands within existing built boundaries be developed and redeveloped to reduce cost of infrastructure before considering green field development.
- That no green field development be permitted except in primary settlement areas.
- That population growth be directed in close proximity to major transportation corridors with a focus on mass transit.
- That major business and job development be directed to primary settlement areas that can more easily assimilate required services.

#### **Discussion:**

##### General Growth

The population growth plan should be sustainable and a net benefit to Simcoe County. This will allow municipalities to develop long-term cost controlled development strategies rather than developer-driven population numbers motivated by access to cheap farmland. This would also curtail land speculators that simply pressure governments to designate lands for urban use even though no proof of need has been provided.

Municipalities should be required to develop and redevelop land within existing built boundaries before any development is permitted beyond the built boundaries:

- Results in lower infrastructure cost and increased density
- Compliments the concept of building complete communities
- More orderly and cost effective development
- Increased economic activity for local small builders and local businesses by creating local jobs since larger developers often lack expertise with small developments.

Population growth should be allocated to municipalities that have already invested in infrastructure that is currently under-utilized, resulting in lower taxes and less municipal debt.

### Transportation

Public transit and greener options that replace private cars and truck transportation should be part of the population growth plan before new developments are allowed to proceed.

A focus should include expansion of mass transit methods such as GO using Barrie as a major hub with possible spur lines to Collingwood, Midland, Orillia. This would take a significant amount of vehicular traffic off the overtaxed Highway 400 corridor. Shared transportation by bus transit in communities such as Wasaga Beach/ Collingwood; Midland/Penetanguishene; Barrie/Springwater (Midhurst and Centre Vespra) would eliminate more vehicular traffic and reduce costs of expanding traffic routes.

Mass transportation should be mandated in all development areas that have planned growth of more than 5,000 people before growth is approved to avoid traffic congestion and unneeded vehicular use.

Community design should also provide an emphasis on active transportation and promote walking and bicycling as a mode of transportation to various local amenities.

### Employment Lands

It is less expensive to direct employment growth and jobs to the primary settlement areas as these areas have infrastructure, housing, vacant industrial buildings and land that is less expensively redeveloped than greenfield development. The employment areas in Bradford and Innisfil, which will require expensive infrastructure, are simply not needed. Jobs would make more sense and be less expensively created in Barrie, Orillia, Collingwood, Alliston and Penetanguishene/Midland that already have adequate housing and job skills. This would also lower the tax rate in these municipalities.

### Development Charges (DC's) don't pay

Do new development charges reduce the tax burden? Mississauga, Barrie, and York Region have experienced 50 years of above average accelerated growth, so their tax burdens should have been reduced. This doesn't seem to be true. Recently, Mississauga has seen a 7.1% increase, Barrie 3.1% and still they are forced to reduce services because of the unsustainable cost of infrastructure. At best new development charges cover 80% of the cost of new infrastructure and the remainder falls to the existing property owner. Unforeseen costs in both additional capital and operating for services such as policing, fire, safety and other social services become the burden of the existing homeowner. These shortfalls are creating above average property tax increases in most growing municipalities. An example: The 2008 Springwater Township Hemson Development Charges report showed that of the \$64.7 million growth-related capital program, approximately \$34.7 million would come from DC charges with the remainder burdened by the taxpayers. That was based on the population growth to 21,000 by 2017 and included no plans for the mega developments around Midhurst that alone will total close to \$200,000,000 when fully developed.

The Altus Report funded by the Land Owners Group in Midhurst estimate the infrastructure cost at \$100,000,000 for the first phase of the Midhurst Secondary Plan of 3,850 homes. It also mentions that the total DC's will be only \$64,000,000 from this phase leaving the taxpayer with over \$35,000,000 in debt. In Springwater every \$1,000,000 of borrowing represents an annual cost of \$88,000 or a 1% mill rate increase.



### **Strategies:**

By educating and informing our councilors through a variety of means such as direct contact, council presentations and public information sessions, it would be the desire that local and county councils will in their Official Plans:

- *Create policies that link local jobs or natural organic growth with the need for housing before growth occurs.*
- *Create policies that direct growth to primary settlement areas and other established settlement areas with existing infrastructure.*
- *Create policies that focus on development and redevelopment of lands within existing built boundaries to reduce cost of infrastructure before consideration of green field development.*
- *Create policies which allow no green field development except in primary settlement areas and only when proof of need is provided.*
- *Create policies that all growth should be directed to areas in close proximity to major transportation corridors with a focus on mass transit such as rail and bus.*
- *Create policies that direct major business and job development to primary settlement areas that can more easily assimilate required services into existing infrastructure.*

### **Summary:**

When the green belt around Toronto was created about 10 years ago, the view was that residential growth would stay close to the large employment centres around the GTA and density would automatically increase. No one imagined that as the land disappeared and was eaten up with poorly planned urban sprawl that these large developers would leap frog the green belt and simply treat Simcoe County as an extension of the GTA.

Simcoe County, with direction from the Province, has the opportunity of taking planning back into its own hands, listening to what the current residents have to say and proceeding in an orderly fashion. The policy and phasing in each of the municipalities should be created by the local council and not dictated by the self-interest of the large landowner groups or developers, which has now become the norm in the last ten years.

The Proposed County of Simcoe modified OP, Amendment 2 of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the new proposed Provincial Policy Statement all lack clarity, specific control or guidance which allows the sprawl and which results in loss of valuable farmland, green spaces and the exhaustion of our fresh water supplies.

## Goal 4: Bringing Employment Home

### Issue:

Bringing employment home means supporting and creating employment in our communities, within the framework of a steady state economy (which is one with a stable population and stable consumption, at or below the carrying capacity of an environment).

In contrast to the widening income disparity and disastrous environmental consequences of a growth economy, a steady state economy is structured to provide full employment and a good life for residents.

It requires restraint in the use of physical resources, to be in balance with what the environment can sustain. But it fosters increased use of non-physical resources – knowledge, human interaction, the art of living. These are the areas of employment where growth is desirable and to be encouraged.

### Objectives:

- That jobs be created first, housing second. Historically, we have built communities around employment. Now, thanks to fossil fuels and undervalued food land, we build communities further and further away from employment except for the temporary employment generated by the construction of those communities. This cannot continue.
- That we work where we live. Work that takes people away on a daily basis fragments the community and undermines its social and democratic structures. But work that's located close to where people live turns employers and employees into community builders.
- That new indicators of success and prosperity be created. Stop relying on indicators like the number of housing starts, or Gross Domestic Product, which assume that economic activity - any economic activity - is in itself beneficial. We need to use an indicator like the Canadian Index of Wellbeing to evaluate benefit and identify meaningless or harmful activities.
- That we reduce consumption of material goods. Instead of encouraging people to support the national economy by spending more so corporations continue to be profitable, a solid-state economy looks at solving problems with fewer resources while creating greater levels of physical and mental well-being for individuals.

### Discussion:

We are lucky in Simcoe County to have, in abundance, two key resources that are essential to life: water and food land. But we are treating them with reckless disregard. We have a moral responsibility to be stewards of water and food land. It is also in our economic interest, as neighbors to Canada's largest city, to maintain those resources. Every acre of farmland paved over represents a loss of productivity and jobs for the next generation and those that follow.

#### Agriculture

Agriculture should be at the centre of the county's economic activities. Further discussion on creating agricultural prosperity is dealt with under Goal #2.

#### Other sectors

The 2006 census had manufacturing as the major employment sector in Simcoe County (15%) followed by retail trade (12%), health care and social assistance (9%), construction (8%), accommodation and food services (7%), and educational services (6%). We should look to reducing reliance on some sectors and increasing others – as well as recovering some that we have lost, for instance the commercial fishery.

### Fishery

Simcoe County borders Lake Huron (Georgian Bay) and Lake Simcoe, two bodies of water that, along with important rivers like Severn and Nottawasaga, were once so full of fish as to astonish the settlers who arrived here. That was 150 years ago, which is not a long time, even in human terms. We can reverse the damage done and make our waters productive again through cleanup and sustainable harvesting.

### Tourism

Our proximity to Canada's largest city makes us a logical choice for easily accessible recreation and relaxation. Preserving and improving our natural spaces helps create jobs for the accommodation and food services sector.

### Knowledge

The knowledge economy creates jobs based on human creativity, not physical resources. We need to support expansion of the knowledge economy through educational institutions as well as workplace and community knowledge sharing. Education is more fully explored in Goal #6.

### Construction

At present, the health of the construction industry is tied to population growth and sprawl. These jobs often come at a heavy environmental price. We need to repurpose this sector towards intensification, retrofitting, and making existing infrastructure more efficient.

### Cleanup

Cleaning up the damage of the past is labour intensive. We need to restore wetlands, mine dumps, reforest derelict land, protect source water, rehabilitate brownfields, eliminate invasive species – all of which have economic benefits and are a high-value use of the taxpayer's dollar. So government can take a lead role – but the private sector can also profit through such activities. In some circumstances, tax breaks can provide additional incentives.

### Entertainment

Artistic, sport and cultural activities draw on non-physical resources, increase individual fulfillment, bring communities together and make Simcoe County an interesting destination.

### Other

It is not the intention of this paper to list all the work Simcoe County residents will need to engage in – from health care to food processing to retail, there are a myriad tasks to be undertaken in our complex and connected society. We need to identify the ones that are beneficial, and support each other so we can do them better.

### **Strategies:**

Municipal politicians can play a pivotal role by recognizing that it's futile to pursue ever more growth to finance the costs of past and current growth.

Instead, they can support a community of communities where positive interactions between all sectors allow creativity to flourish and new ideas to find fertile ground. A few first steps:

- *Allow no exemptions for new development that fails the test of livable communities where people can find work, services and recreation, and get around by active transportation. Current planning pays lip service to the concept - but most approved existing development in Simcoe County demonstrates all the failures that result from doing the opposite.*
- *View environmental cleanup as the 'best use' of the tax dollar.*

- *Approve new infrastructure that increases efficiency and conserves resources. Prohibit infrastructure aimed solely at creating growth – which pushes up taxes, paves over farmland and depletes water and other resources.*
- *Encourage the knowledge economy, and innovation in creating new types of enterprises.*
- *Support arts, sport, culture and other community-building activities.*

### **Summary:**

It is worth looking at the ‘One Wales: One Planet’ example. That country is working to reduce its population’s Environmental Footprint to the global average (1.88 global hectares per person) within a generation.

Wales has an area of 20,779 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 3 million. Simcoe County is one quarter of the size with 4,859 km<sup>2</sup> and has one-sixth of the population with 446,000 people.

We can be ambitious too, and take charge of how we want to live.

## **Goal 5: Reliable Sustainable Energy**

### **Issues:**

Energy used in Simcoe County has largely, in recent years, been centrally produced outside the county, in nuclear, and in fossil fuel facilities. Both strategies are unsustainable on a long-term basis and present serious economic, health and safety issues.

The transmission of imported energy from distant generation sites produces significant energy loss, is vulnerable to disruption and the infrastructure is expensive.

Energy conservation offers very significant savings in energy consumption that are far from being maximized. Some local electrical energy generation and transmission, such as industrial solar farms, can negatively affect air, water and farmland resources. Various strategies for mining fossil fuels such as “fracking” can also have negative effects and are concerning.

Energy conservation can be made more difficult by poor planning decisions.

### **Objectives:**

Agriculture, manufacturing and tourism are mainstays of the Simcoe economy. All three impact energy usage and will be influenced by energy policy decisions. Accordingly, all three sectors should be considered when forming any energy policy recommendations.

Policy decisions about energy usage in Simcoe County should be influenced predominantly by these imperatives:

- That energy be used as efficiently as possible.
- That energy be produced locally, as far as possible, and in a long-term sustainable fashion.
- That the effects of energy production and distribution on air, water and farmland resources in Simcoe County is minimized.
- That the proportion of nuclear and fossil-fuel generated energy in the mix of energy imported to Simcoe is reduced.

## Discussion:

### Energy Conservation and Efficiency

- Since much energy is used locally for residential and commercial lighting and heating, there are big savings still available in energy conservation here. This should be encouraged by education, grants and taxation policy.
- Since much of Simcoe County is rural, transportation is an energy-intensive issue. Multiple strategies should be developed around energy reduction in the transportation sector.
  - The strategies should include the maintenance and restoration of rail lines throughout the county for both freight and passenger traffic.
  - Any proposed new roads should be subject to an energy planning review, considering the long-term energy costs, including capital and maintenance energy costs.
  - Provisions for Active Transportation such as walking, biking, car-sharing and car-pooling should be part of all planning for new and existing communities.
  - Serious efforts must be made to move our communities, including existing communities, towards Active Transportation (walking, biking, etc.), with shopping, employment and recreation within a reasonable distance.
- The agricultural sector is energy intensive in many ways. The local agricultural community must be encouraged and supported in their efforts to reduce both electrical and fossil fuel usage, including reduction in the use of fossil-fuel-based fertilizers.
- Distributed energy generation and storage, and time of use billing require sophisticated grid management techniques. Efforts to develop the so-called “Smart Grid”, with support for alternative energy sources, are increasingly important and should be encouraged.

### Local and Sustainable Energy

- Although Simcoe County will probably continue to rely, to some extent, on energy from outside the county, energy should be generated locally, where possible. A typical community spends 20 percent of its gross income buying energy, and 80 percent of those dollars leave town buying imported energy. According to the Iowa Policy Project, locally owned renewable energy projects generate 5-10 times the local economic benefits than do conventional ownership models. From a solely economic perspective every dollar invested by local community members results in a three times multiplier within the community.
- Wind turbines are potentially a valuable component of the mix in reducing our dependence on imported nuclear and fossil-fuel generated energy. Efforts must be made to find ways to accommodate wind power that are widely acceptable within Simcoe communities and acknowledge current concerns.



- Photo-voltaic or solar energy is beginning to make a useful contribution to the energy supply in Simcoe County. This strategy is especially useful in supporting distributed energy generation strategies, and in supplying peak load energy.
- Long-term maintenance and improvement of the local Simcoe electrical grid and external connections must be supported.
- In most cases, locally generated electrical energy should make use of some form of Smart Grid as it develops.

- Since nuclear and fossil fuels will not be developed locally, and are not sustainable, efforts should continue to be made to reduce their use in all sectors.

### Protection of Agricultural and Water Resources

- No local energy production strategy or conservation measure should reduce the supply or damage the quality of agriculturally viable land or water, including run-off, ground water, lake and river water.
- Any local “small hydro” energy production should go through a careful environmental review.

### **Strategies:**

While municipal government cannot alone deal with all the issues around energy usage, they can and should, through their planning and bylaw powers, have a significant impact. AWARE Simcoe might help educate our councillors, and their constituents, through a variety of outreach, about wise energy policy, and how municipal councils can help.

Municipal Councils can, largely through planning imperatives, create policies

- *that ensure that no class 1 to 5 farmland is used for industrial energy generation.*
- *that direct growth to primary settlement areas and other established settlement areas to conserve energy expended on transportation, energy transmission, and the creation of new infrastructure.*
- *that focus on redevelopment of lands within built boundaries, and on increased density on these lands to reduce the energy cost involved in transportation, energy transmission, and the creation of new infrastructure.*
- *that focus any growth to areas in close proximity to major transportation corridors, and include specific planning for rail and bus mass transit to reduce the energy cost of transportation, and the creation of redundant infrastructure.*
- *that encourage the use of modern building codes that mandate highly energy efficient building strategies.*
- *that encourage local electrical utilities to support local electrical generation, and reward conservation.*
- *that strongly encourage conservation at all municipal facilities.*
- *that strongly encourage conservation in homes, businesses and other private facilities.*
- *that support sustainable local electrical generation.*

AWARE Simcoe might also enlist the support and encouragement of Local Electrical Utilities, community groups, non-governmental organizations, and individual residents to do their part in supporting the local conservation and production of energy.

### **Summary:**

Availability of a sustainable supply of energy will continue to be very important to residents and businesses of Simcoe County. The proportion of electrical energy in the overall supply will likely increase, as we move away from fossil fuel based energy for transportation and agriculture.

Some initial steps have been taken in energy conservation but much “low-hanging fruit” remains. Conservation is by far the most effective strategy we have according to the 2011 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Consequently, all municipalities and other government organizations, local citizens and non-governmental organizations should emphasize and support conservation strategies, both for electrical energy as well as for other energy forms.

While the importation of energy from beyond Simcoe County will likely continue in the medium term, action should be taken by municipalities to support electrical generation within the county, and close to where it is used.

Transportation within Simcoe County requires the use of significant energy. Future planning within the county should use all strategies to minimize this impact.

Agriculture will become an increasingly important element of a sustainable food supply within the county, and all municipalities should prevent any further loss of Class 1 to 5 farmland for industrial electrical generation, or indeed, any other reason.

Clean air and water are essential resources, and indeed possibly human rights. All municipalities should ensure that no energy generation strategy, including “fracking”, damages the air, water or soil of the county.

## **Goal 6 – Awareness of the Need for Sustainability**

### **Issue:**

Traditionally decisions regarding the future of an area have been made either in the absence of knowledge about the impacts or, in some cases, ignoring facts that are already available. Developments have far too often been driven by land ownership and not by the carrying capacity of an area, thus often threatening sustainability. The Places to Grow Act has provided the skeletal framework to address this issue. What is needed now is a lot of hard work putting the meat on the bones to ensure this framework translates into meaningful decisions on the ground.

The responsibility for the development of a plan to achieve sustainability is clearly that of governments at all levels but, because of the nature of our democratic system, these decision makers need not only the technical knowledge to make the right decisions in a holistic manner, but they also need the support of the electorate. There is, therefore, a need to ensure that, not only is knowledge imparted to the politicians and their staff, but also to the public as it is ultimately the public that provides the political backbone to ensure wise development occurs.

### **Objectives:**

- That all decisions made toward the future development of Simcoe County are made in support of a sustainable economic, cultural and environmental vision.
- That the knowledge needed to support these decisions be imparted to the decision makers in an effective and efficient manner.

### **Discussion:**

Valuable technical information is collected at all levels of government, but the data is not always shared or used in a way that provides for a holistic approach to developing a plan for sustainability.

In order to understand what is needed to develop a plan for cultural, economic and environmental sustainability, the important components of each and their interaction with each other need to be identified and coordinated in a holistic plan.

The political will to implement a plan is garnered from support from the electorate. It is therefore important that this element be as informed as possible so they can provide the needed political backing when necessary.

Many issues and concerns arise on a local, one issue problem. However, many of these issues have a commonality and are often associated with the need to take a more comprehensive and holistic approach to planning in an area. It would benefit all parties if the local concerned groups were to share information and/or join together with AWARE Simcoe to provide greater strength in promoting their concerns.

In order to ensure a knowledge base is available both now and in the future, the components of sustainable development need to be researched and taught at all levels of our education system. These people will not only be the future support staff working on preparing a plan but they will also be the electorate that provides the political backbone for the decision makers.

### **Strategies:**

- *Encourage the use of all available data from sources both inside Simcoe County and externally to ensure the best science is brought to bear on developing a plan for sustainability.*
- *Work with planning staff at all levels of government to explain what components should be addressed in a holistic planning model and how that will contribute to a sustainable future.*
- *The County of Simcoe and local area municipalities provide/support/facilitate local forums for dissemination of information relative to the achievement of this vision.*
- *AWARE Simcoe seek out opportunities to support local groups where the issue would have an impact on sustainable development in Simcoe County.*
- *Encourage the Ministries of Education and Colleges and Universities to develop a curriculum which is informative of the need for and the components which make up a plan for sustainable communities.*

### **Summary:**

In order to achieve the vision laid out in this document, there is a need to inform and educate the decision makers and the electorate on the need for sustainable development and redevelopment. It is hoped that all partners can work together to achieve this goal.

## **Goal 7: Healthy Lifestyles**

### **Issue:**

It is widely understood that many people in our society live less than optimum lives as a result of avoidable chronic illness or physical conditions that limit their mobility and compromise their health. These illnesses place a huge burden on individual sufferers and their families, and a huge financial burden on public health care systems. It is generally understood that these life-limiting maladies often result from lifestyle habits and choices, namely poor diets and insufficient exercise.

Lifestyle related illnesses include coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, some forms of cancer, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and dental caries. The need for knee and hip replacement correlates strongly with excess weight and obesity.

Among OECD countries with universal, publicly funded, health care systems, Canada ranks third in per capita expenditure but only seventeenth in total life expectancy that will be lived in full health.

The food industry manufactures and promotes food and beverage products that are demonstrably unhealthy and contain high levels of salt, sugar and unhealthy fats.

About 70% of Ontario health care costs are government funded and 42% (\$48 billion) of government spending is for health care. If the cost of health care continues to increase at the current rate, it will absorb 80% of provincial program spending by 2030. This is clearly unsustainable.

**Objective:**

- Develop and implement policies at all levels of government that facilitate healthier lifestyles as outlined in The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Health Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans recommendations on Environment, Physical Activity, Food Access, Social Cohesion and Well Being etc.

**Discussion:**

Sixty percent of all deaths in Ontario are attributable to smoking, alcohol, poor diet, lack of physical activity and stress. More than 600,000 people in Ontario (population 13.6 million) have been diagnosed with diabetes (90% Type 2) and it is estimated that more than another 300,000 have the disease but have not been diagnosed. Diabetes leads to other diseases and causes a great deal of suffering and disability. The cost to the Health Care System is about \$4,500 per patient per year.

In October 2012, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) held a news conference to raise awareness about what they called an “obesity epidemic” and hailed successful anti-tobacco campaigns as examples of ways governments can change behavior. Furthermore, stats show that 75 per cent of obese children become obese adults. In the 1980s, only 18 per cent of children were considered obese. The OMA’s proposals came just two weeks after Statistics Canada released new figures on children’s health. The stats showed that 31.5 per cent of children between the ages of five and 17 years old are overweight.

Speaking after the news conference, Dr. Doug Weir, president of the OMA, said obesity is a major issue for Canadians, especially in Ontario where 60 per cent of residents are considered either overweight or obese. “They’re at risk for liver disease, cancer, kidney disease – a whole slew of things”. He said part of the problem is that people have misconceptions about what is nutritious and what is not. A combination of education, affordability and marketing restrictions will help steer people in the right direction. Dr. Weir said Ontario’s Liberal government has been supportive of anti-obesity initiatives and he’s hopeful they will be on board to accept the OMA’s recommendations.

In a news release, the OMA said: “Anti-tobacco campaigns have helped to reduce smoking rates in Ontario from close to 50 per cent in the 1960s to less than 20 per cent today”. “Tax increases were the most important reason for this success, followed by public information (including disturbing images of diseased lungs and other graphic depictions of the negative effects of smoking), removal of retail tobacco displays, and advertising bans.”



With respect to increasing physical activity, local and provincial governments can play a major role by facilitating the development of more compact communities, where walking and bicycling are practical forms of transportation. While recreational trails are highly desirable assets for all communities, healthier populations need active transportation to become part of the normal fabric of life.

Many negative health effects of urban sprawl are documented in the “Report on Public Health and Urban Sprawl in Ontario”, published in 2005, by the Ontario College of Family Physicians. This report cites a study showing that residents of more walkable/bicycle-friendly areas participate in 70 minutes more physical exercise per week than those who live in areas of sprawl, and are significantly less likely to be overweight (BMI >25) at 35% compared to 60%. Most built environments in Ontario were developed since the automobile age, with the result that our communities tend to be automobile dependent. More compact communities also facilitate public transportation which can also encourage more walking and less automobile use.

## Strategies

With respect to healthier diets, we can't do better than to support the recommendations of the OMA. The Association recommended mimicking those anti-smoking campaigns including:

- *Restrict the marketing of junk food to children*
- *Increase taxes on junk food while decreasing taxes on health food*
- *Place a graphic warning label on pop and unhealthy foods that contain little or no nutritional value*
- *Restrict the sale of junk foods in sports/recreation facilities where young people are known to frequent.*
- *Municipalities recognize that some of our communities are food deserts where fresh healthy food is not readily available for non-car owners. While most of the OMA proposals would primarily depend on actions by the Provincial and Federal governments, local governments can have supportive roles.*
- *Ensure that all new development adheres to the Provincial Policy Statement, Provincial Growth Plan and the SMDHU recommendations with respect to providing strong, livable and healthy communities.*

## Summary:

It is clear that all levels of government need to co-operate in multi-faceted approaches to effect dietary and lifestyle changes. Changes to the physical environment are more effective than moralizing in bringing about lifestyle changes, and it is easily possible to design communities to promote physical activity. They have smaller housing lots, more parks and open spaces, vibrant town centres with shops, restaurants, workplaces and theatres nearby. The 2005 study, referred to above, describes the many influences that physical environments have on the health and well being of societies. In addition to the fact that urban sprawl is extremely costly in financial terms, it promotes social isolation, damages health, increases commute times and stress, and reduces civic engagement. Children, the elderly and people with disabilities are particularly affected.

From a wider perspective, it is interesting to note that sprawl increases the average ecological footprint (and hence the negative environmental impact) of urban residents. E.g. While Toronto has an average footprint of 7.36 hectares per person; the value for York Region is 10.33. Note: The global average is 2.7, which is already 50% higher than the world average bio capacity, which was 1.8 hectares per person in 2007 – and this value is steadily decreasing as population and environmental damage both increase.

Other areas of concern: GMOs, herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics and hormones fed to farm animals for non-therapeutic purposes.

## References:

### Goal 1: A Healthy Environment

<http://www.carryingcapacity.org/>  
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### Goal 2: Agricultural Prosperity

- 1 – Definition of Sustainability – Bruntland Commission of the United Nations – 1987
- 2 – Net Benefit – Standards Australia – Guide to Net Benefit – Revised March 3, 2011
- 3 – Provincial Policy Statement – 2005 - Province of Ontario – (currently under review)
- 4 – Agricultural Easements - Ontario Farmland Trust [www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca](http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca)
- 5 – Conseil de la cooperation de l’Ontario [christian.howald@cco.coop](mailto:christian.howald@cco.coop)
- 6 – Rural Development Entrepreneurs - RDEE Ontario [www.rdee-ont.ca](http://www.rdee-ont.ca)
- 7 – Land Use issues - Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA)  
<http://www.ofa.on.ca/issues/overview/land-use.aspx>
- 8 – Municipal Impacts on Agriculture – Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA)  
<http://www.ofa.on.ca/issues/additional-information/Municipal-Impacts-onAgriculture>
- 9 - Farmland Loss - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
<http://smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/StatsCan%20Agr%20Loss%20to%20Urban%20Areas%20Report.pdf>  
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- 10 – Peel Federation of Agriculture comments on PPS review 3<sup>rd</sup> draft.doc November 22, 2012  
[peelfederationofagriculture@gmail.com](mailto:peelfederationofagriculture@gmail.com)  
[PFA Comments on the 2012 PPS Review 3rd draft.doc](#)
- 11- Simcoe County Food and Agriculture Charter, Food Partners Alliance

### **Goal 3: Development that is a Net Benefit to the Community**

1. Region of Peel Sept 10, 2012 Final 2012 Development Charges By-law Report  
<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/1261086--peel-development-charge-increase-means-homebuyers-pay-extra-18-000>
2. City of Hamilton Amendment for Development Charges By-law 09-43 June 9, 2011
3. Sustainable Prosperity Article Jan 30, 2012 <http://www.sustainableprosperity.ca/article2370>
4. Hemson Consulting Cost Recovery Plan Township of Springwater July 2006
5. Altus Group Economic Implications for Midhurst Secondary Plan Area Dec 23, 2009
6. Hemson Consulting Peer Review Report of Altus Report May 4, 2010

\*Items 2, 4, 5, and 6 are available from the municipality's planning department.

### **Goal 4: Bringing Employment Home**

2010 Ontario Works Caseload and Economic Indicators Report

p.8 [http://www.simcoe.ca/ws\\_cos/groups/public/@pub-cos-ow/documents/web\\_content/wscos\\_008227.pdf](http://www.simcoe.ca/ws_cos/groups/public/@pub-cos-ow/documents/web_content/wscos_008227.pdf)

One Wales: One Planet

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/829/One%20Wales-%20One%20Planet%20%282009%29.pdf>

### **Goal 5: Reliable Sustainable Energy**

#### **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Annual Reports**

2001-2 - Developing Sustainability

[http://www.eco.on.ca/index.php?page=2001-02-annual-report&hl=en\\_US](http://www.eco.on.ca/index.php?page=2001-02-annual-report&hl=en_US)

2002/3 - Thinking Beyond the Near and Now

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2008/9 - Building Resilience

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2009/10 - Redefining Conservation

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2011 - Restoring Balance

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2009 - Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario

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#### **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Blog -**

January 14, 2013 What's a Negawatt Worth?

<http://www.eco.on.ca/blog/>

## **Ontario Clean Air Alliance Publications**

Energizing the Drummond Report - How Ontario can Reap Multi-billion Dollar Savings

<http://www.cleanairalliance.org/files/active/0/drummondreport.pdf>

An Energy Efficiency Strategy for Ontario's Homes, Buildings and Industries

[http://www.cleanairalliance.org/files/active/0/EE\\_Strategy\\_Report\\_Oct2011.pdf](http://www.cleanairalliance.org/files/active/0/EE_Strategy_Report_Oct2011.pdf)

Powerful Options - A Review of Options for Replacing Ontario's Aging Nuclear Plants

<http://www.cleanairalliance.org/files/active/0/replacingnuclear.pdf>

## **The Transition Network:**

<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

## **LEED ND:**

<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=148>

## **A Pattern Language:**

<http://www.designmatrix.com/pl/index.html>

## **Principles of New Urbanism:**

<http://www.newurbanism.org/newurbanism/principles.html>

**Globe and Mail - January 23, 2013** - The City State: How Urban Design Affects Our Health

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-city-state-how-urban-design-affects-our-health/article7616817/>

## **Ontario Building Code - Energy Efficiency and Newly Released Code**

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page7154.aspx> AND <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10163.aspx>

## **Goal 6 – Awareness of the need for Sustainability**

### **Goal 7: Healthy Lifestyles**

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Health Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans

Ontario College of Family Physicians Report on Public Health and Urban Sprawl in Ontario, 2005

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