Deputation to Essa Council, March 20, 2019

Greetings:

Background: As you know, for the past two years, AWARE Essa, along with forestry experts and other organizations, has worked to keep the Ontario Tree Seed Plant open. Now we are working to keep the site in public hands.

AWARE Essa is asking that:

1. Essa Council include the Ontario Tree Seed Plant site on the Cultural Heritage Resource Inventory as described in Section 13 of the Official Plan.
2. Essa Council will support efforts to keep the site of the OTSP in public hands.

AWARE forwarded a document to council showing that the OTSP site meets enough of the criteria outlined in Section 13 to justify beginning the process of designation as a Cultural Heritage Resource in Essa.

Reasons for request:

* Documents and books are essential tools for preserving history, but history must be visible in the community so that people can make connections to the past in their daily lives.
* The ideal site for keeping history alive is the place where it happened.
* A community that understands its past has a stronger identity and can withstand challenges, attract tourists and visitors and welcome economic opportunities.
* The OTSP site connects Essa to the history of Simcoe County and all of Ontario.

The future of the OTSP site will be uncertain as long as the provincial government insists on asking market price from public organizations interested in the site. Proposals from public organizations will be accepted until the end of June 2019. To our knowledge, no proposals have been put forward yet.

Essa Council can help address this problem by:

* Supporting organizations or coalitions of organizations with plans for public uses of the site. Approval of local municipal government can influence the provincial government.
* Using Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment referenced in the Official Plan (Section 13.2.5) to protect heritage features of the OTSP from any development proposals

Reasons for request:

* The Ontario Tree Seed Plant was created and has been supported with public money since 1923. As local citizens we have the right to determine what will happen to our investment.
* As long as the OTSP site remains in public hands, it has the potential to continue to benefit the community.
* The site of the OTSP near the Nottawasaga River makes it exceptionally valuable as a green space in regulating water quality and preventing runoff.
* As the population of Essa increases there will be a corresponding increase in the need for: (1) green spaces, parks to help adapt to the effects of climate change

(2) an accessible town centre with comfortable outdoor spaces for residents of all ages to gather

(3) natural settings to encourage active lifestyles and mental health

If the site of the OTSP is sold at market value, it will inevitably become a subdivision or a commercial/industrial park. All the potential values we have described will be permanently lost. As our municipal council, you have the power to say NO to any changes in zoning and consider instead the benefits to the residents of Essa Township in keeping this site as a public space. For a short time, we have the opportunity to leave a positive legacy for next generations. We trust that Essa Council will act in the best long-term interests of citizens and support preserving the site of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant.