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## Ontario Government Abandons Land Conservation

Land Trusts attempt to continue to conserve nature reserves, despite the virtual stop of all such work by government and Conservation Authorities. MNR has now stopped the Ontario Land Trust Assistance Program, their program of funding such expenses as appraisals and legal work to receive donated properties. This means a loss of 1/3 of the revenue for many conservancies like EBC. This will reduce the acquisition of sensitive lands that provide not just public access but ecological services like improved water and air quality.

Ontario looks bad internationally. Despite agreeing to the International Convention on Biodiversity which sets 12% as a minimum for parks and protected areas in each eco region, Ontario south of the Canadian Shield has never reached higher than 3.79%. Just as our Environmental Commissioner has drawn our attention to the International Convention standard being raised to 17%, the provincial government makes this cut.

The Ontario government has made heavy cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). From 1956 to 2011, MNR funded efforts to conserve land. With its help, Mac Kirk, our recently deceased board member, was able to buy 19,000 acres for Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. Now, Ontario has ceased all funding for land acquisition, but increased funding for health and education.

Please join us in asking MNR Minister Michael Gravelle to restore funding.

**Hon Michael Gravelle  
Minister of Natural Resources  
99 Wellesley St. W.  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1W3**

**Contact:  
Bob Barnett  
Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy  
503 Davenport Road  
Toronto, M4V1B8  
888-815-9575  
rbarnett@escarpment.ca  
www.escarpment.ca**



Hi Sean,  
I just read your article in Escarpment Views and found it very interesting.  
We live up on the Bruce Peninsula and because there is so much rock and grass wouldn't grow, we decided to put in a perennial garden (with lots of rocks). The garden when finished was topped with the dark brown wood chips.  
The leaves were very hard to rake/blow last fall but we did that and now after reading your article I'm wondering if we can get away with lifting just the excess leaves before winter. Next spring we could possibly put on another layer of wood chips?? There is a plastic ground cover under the chips to cut back on the weeds.  
I'm curious as to what the large leafed plant at the corner of the house would be. Looks something like a banana tree.  
I'm looking forward to your reply and hope to read some more articles written by you in Escarpment Views magazine.

**Sandy Price, Dyers Bay**

Hi Sandy,  
I've never had great luck using plastic to keep weeds down. It always ends up poking through the mulch and looking ugly and the weeds seem to find a way through anyway. Mostly, what it seems to do is stop me from being able to effectively weed. More importantly it prevents organic matter from getting into the soil. We often think about fertilizing but we don't think about adding organic matter. Compost should be applied every year and if Mother Nature is willing to do the job, I say let her. A soil rich in compost is actually easier to weed and holds moisture better. I would actually remove the plastic and put the mulch back. Then as far as the leaves go, you have a couple of options. I either gently blow most of the leaves out onto an open area and mow over them, squirting them back into the bed or I use a leaf vacuum but without the bag on the back. I make sure no one's standing behind me, suck them up and squirt them back out into the flower bed, letting the blower chop them up as I do. This way they will be all broken down and worked in the soil by spring. It's an easy and effective way to deal with them and help nature do her job. Leaves like maple and birch will be gone by mid May and, believe it or not, even oak leaves will be done by mid June. Hopefully that helps.  
The large leaf plant in the back corner is *Musa basjoo*, the reputedly "Hardy Banana" which I've never successfully overwintered although I've tried several times. Hardy or not, it makes a great point of interest for texture.

**Sean James  
President of Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting**

Hello from Chatsworth Township. It looks like you may have a *Russula paludosa*, although it is difficult to tell by a picture. *Russula* varieties are not uncommon, but neither I or my 91-year-old Mother have ever found any of these in my bush, but we have lots of their relatives – *Lactarius deliciosus*. Mind you we have found three different varieties of *Russula* in the Haliburton/Minden area. Most are edible, some are not. My Mother lives on her own in Hamilton, but visits for weeks at a time to "hunt mushrooms." We feast and freeze the edible varieties she finds.

I love your magazine and the Niagara Escarpment. Always something new to discover.

**Tricia Selbie, Markdale**

I believe the mushroom in your *Escarpment Views* of Autumn 2012 on page 50 is an orange *fungomon*.

**Lynne Liptrap, email**

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# Readers & Viewers

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The other day I picked up a copy, luckily, of your *Escarpment Views* and it's magnificent. I never saw such photography. I can't get over it. It's just a fascinating magazine. It's so beautiful. It's beyond description really. I thought I've got to phone you and thank you for this beautiful, beautiful magazine. **Marg Seifried, Georgetown**

I read with interest the recent edition of *Escarpment Views*. I'm part of a trail-oriented website called Geotrail and we promote hiking and outdoor activity in a number of locations, many of which are close to, or within, the Niagara Escarpment. We highlight interesting places to go, including waterfalls and historical destinations along the trails. I was very impressed with the magazine and congratulations on your 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Keep up the good work!  
**Paul Shaker, Geotrail**

Although I am a new subscriber having seen only three issues, I enjoy your magazine very much. I wish I had picked up the first copy a few years ago. I think I've missed a lot. The photography is wonderful. I love the centerfolds. As an older man with eyesight not too good, I wonder if some other people out there would be happy if the type size was a little larger? Just a thought. Keep up the good work.  
**John Browett, St. Thomas**

Lots of people have been by the gallery – the response has been wonderful! And Babe is now a celebrity :) My husband was the first to see the magazine. He was sitting in the waiting room at a medical clinic in Collingwood – when he looked down there were his two favourite women! Everyone who comes into the gallery wants a copy.  
**Suzanne Steeves, Creemore**

Just wanted to take a moment and congratulate you and your team on completing your fifth year of publishing. Interesting to read about how you have persevered through tough times. I for one am very glad you did, and your efforts to raise the awareness of the importance of the Niagara Escarpment are very much appreciated. As an "end-to-end" hiker, I can testify that it is indeed a hugely valuable natural asset to Ontario. Keep up the good work in putting out this beautiful magazine.  
**Laurent Thibault, Georgetown**

Congratulations on the 5th year anniversary of *Escarpment Views*, which is a great magazine. The articles in the magazine always have interesting facts about place relatively close to home, and the pictures remind us again and again of the beautiful area we live in.  
**Marg Megelink, Georgetown**

Congratulations on the current issue. It is a wonderful read! Photography is great! Thank you.  
**Helen Buckton, Georgetown**

Many thanks for the great article you did on me. A fantastic shot of the studio and of me at work. This should make me famous, ha ha ha.  
A BIG THANKS.  
**John Reid, Alton**

