

Politicians' Views: UNESCO Biosphere Designation ?

This question was sent to some local politicians. Some responses follow.

In 2012 UNESCO renewed its designation of the Niagara Escarpment as a World Biosphere Reserve. What, if any, is the significance of this? What does it mean for the Niagara Escarpment?

Hon. Michael Chong, MP for Wellington-Halton Hills (Conservative Party of Canada)

The Niagara Escarpment stretches 725 km from Niagara Falls to Manitoulin Island. Approximately six million Ontarians live within a short drive of the Escarpment, which traverses one of the most heavily populated regions of Canada. Rich in biodiversity, this remarkable natural area covers nearly 2,000 km² and is home to hundreds of species at risk, important watersheds, farmlands and 450-million years of geological history.

Recognizing its importance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the Escarpment as a World Biosphere Reserve in 1990. A biosphere reserve is an ecologically important area that also supports economic and recreational activities. In a biosphere reserve, local committees of representatives from sectors such as agriculture, tourism, business, conservation, and education, work together to develop projects that link conservation with economic development in their community. These voluntary committees ensure that the protection of this important ecological area has the support of local communities. UNESCO's renewal of this designation in 2012 is a testament to the hard work of local citizens in protecting this important part of Canada's natural environment.

Kevin Flynn, MPP for Oakville (Ontario Liberal)

The significance is that it gives the Niagara Escarpment international recognition for the important ecological and cultural values in an area. It also provides a mechanism based on local commitment and local ability to apply sound stewardship (and protection where necessary) to the use of resources in an area to support present and future generations.

We are actually waiting for the final determination in 2014.

As part of the review process, external reviewers appointed by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO were assigned to prepare a Periodic Review Report. This was completed in December 2013 and the conclusion of the external reviewers was: "that the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve definitely merits continued membership in the world network of Biosphere Reserves."

The review Report accompanied by the recommendations has been submitted to UNESCO (January 2013) and will be considered by the Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves, who will make the final determination on the status of the biosphere reserve designation and provide confirmation of the final recommendations. We anticipate hearing the results sometime in 2014.

NEC staff is continuing to collaborate with and engage biosphere reserve partners and stakeholders to promote and support the principles of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve.

Political Representatives 
Listed by riding

