

# Cheaper to Prevent Quarries

By Bob Barnett

**W**e've seen the expensive fights against quarries. It costs a lot to present planning and hydrological evidence that nature will be harmed. Tom Ashman and Dee Cherrie had a different vision. They had quarries around their Escarpment property in Wiarton and didn't need a crystal ball to know what the "highest and best" next use would be. They chose to put a conservation agreement on their property which would never allow quarries.

Canada Revenue Agency says donations to religious organizations reach 40 per cent of total donations while health reaches 21 per cent, social services 11 per cent, international causes eight per cent, education four per cent and the environment at only three per cent. Environmental donations do top the arts at one per cent and sports at two per cent. This is especially strange when a protected environment has been proven to enhance health and improve educational outcomes.

Religious donations also support social causes and international work, but a great deal must go toward salaries and building upkeep for the organizations themselves.

If it were only better recognized that the environment provides us with a parallel economy. Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry figures cleaner air and water, with flood control and rare species thrown in are worth \$84 billion a year, just in southern Ontario. That's almost as much as the government spends on hospitals, schools, roads and whatever else is in Ontario's

annual budget. Strange how health, social services and education get both substantial government funding and loads of donations. Strange how government funding for environmental causes has taken such a dive, just as we and Kathleen Wynne are figuring out that climate change is the biggest problem facing society.

In *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* George Marshall explains our lack of interest in the environment very well:

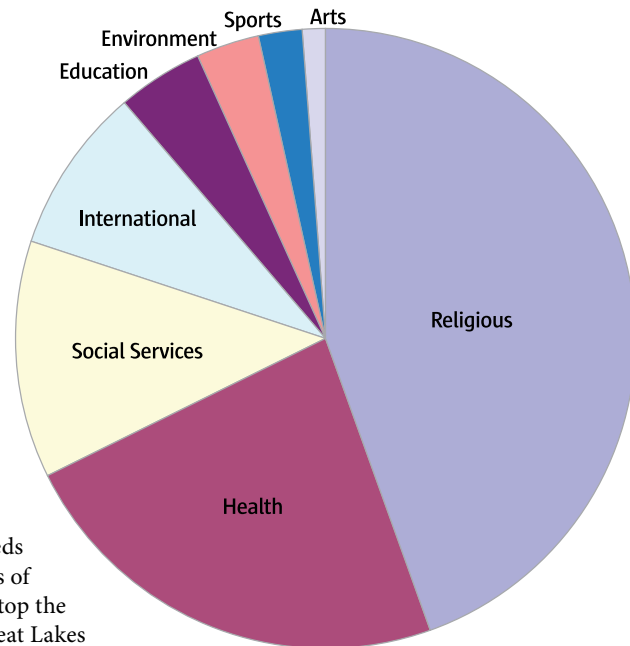
1. It's too big to deal with
2. You can't see it very clearly
3. The message is confused by religious and economic ideas
4. Protecting it is not going to make us popular
5. Our brains deal with emergencies better than big issues
6. It's not a big problem today
7. It's not right on our door step
8. It's not a certainty
9. We have other things to worry about
10. It's a difficult problem, let's do something simpler
11. It's for our children, not us

## Buy It Or Lose It

I've been fundraising for 20 years now. The best campaign I ever ran was to protect Skinner's Bluff on the Bruce Trail up by Wiarton. The owner had erected a sign I still have in my basement saying "Buy it or you can't walk on it". We had a deposit down and we printed photos of people standing there admiring the view. The money came in.

There is a lot of money available when the right people ask and it's for a close-at-hand, tangible battle to protect a visible part of the community.

► Canada Revenue Agency's size of charitable donations by category



I've seen local cottagers band together to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to "Stop the Drop" in Great Lakes water levels. One wealthy businessman gave \$100,000. We raised about \$200,000 to fight the development of the David Dunlop Observatory site. The people of Richmond Hill really got on the bandwagon. Sarah Harmer organized some great concerts to fight the Nelson Quarry at Mount Nemo in Burlington. They paid for a lot of consultants and experts, but Jefferson Salamanders saved the day and killed the project.

At Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) we're stuck with paying the cost of our success. With a new reserve every month, and in rural communities all over south-central Ontario, we find it hard to marshal the donations to pay for appraisals, legal fees and the occasional survey. Last year it cost us about \$100,000 to protect 1,478 acres worth \$2,632,000 and protecting \$4,440,000 a year of those hard-to-understand ecosystem services every year. That's the best conservation bargain around! Every dollar protects \$26 worth of land and \$44 worth of cleaner air and water.

## Prevent Quarries

I see people donating \$100,000 hoping to stop a quarry or a pit and I compare that with the few thousand it takes to provide preventative environmental medicine and protect the land BEFORE the developer buys it. EBC is a better investment. But we lack the urgency and the stark picture of what will happen when they "blow a hole in my Escarpment." Just as the Bruce Trail is successful because people support the land they walk on, we're hoping you'll come out and walk on our trails, see our trees and put your feet in Lake Huron.

I'm surprised that the same landowners that spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours fighting the quarries rarely protect their own property with a "no quarry" conservation agreement.

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