

# Our Escarpment Challenge

By Bob Barnett

Land prices are going through the roof and donors are pinched by high interest rates.

Just in time, Environment Canada has set out in earnest to conserve as much land as possible to meet their 2025 and 2030 targets of 25 and 30 per cent of our land conserved. Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy was able to help last year by setting aside 9.3 square km with 2.5 km of Escarpment slope. That included 2.1 km on Manitoulin's Wolsey Lake where Roy Jeffery has already built a trail and more at Ten Mile Point.

This year our Escarpment goal is even more ambitious:

- We have a signed offer to protect four km of Escarpment on Barrie Island with good trail potential
- We are working to add a further km at our Fossil Hill reserve
- We are getting a donation of 500m of Escarpment near Kemble and have an offer accepted to get a further 500m nearby.
- We are negotiating for 300m in Springmount near Jones Falls on the Pottawatomi

- We are hoping to protect 300m near Sheguiandah by agreement
- We are negotiating to purchase 77 acres near Meaford on the lower Ordovician Escarpment with important fossils
- We are discussing three other "flat" Escarpment properties with 83 acres.

All these projects are within reach, but just reaching out and hoping money will fall in won't do it. On some projects we need to fulfil our obligation to match the value of the funding with donated land or cash. Every project needs appraisers and lawyers who, no surprise, send a bill when they've done their part. We also always need enough money, five per cent of money raised, to pay our staff and keep the office running.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has offered to contribute \$5.5 million if we can match that amount. That's huge!!! But accepting that offer means we have to do our part... and we can't just hope the land and money come in. We depend on you.

### Each Dollar Becomes Six

The good news is that each dollar that comes in to

► Barrie Island, part of Manitoulin Island. This project includes four km of Escarpment and shoreline.



fund Escarpment purchases becomes SIX dollars after the contributions of ECCC and land donors. Those six dollars don't fall into a pit, never to be seen again. They create hiking trails and protect a variety of species FOREVER!!! You get to walk there, just as I walked the Bruce Trail with my own kids 40 years ago. Now their kids are soaking up nature.

Then they protect nature's services. Bruce and Grey Counties have declared a climate emergency. Rain and winds are increasing their intensity. Our wetlands soak up and slow down the flood waters. Our forests absorb water and carbon. They slowly release the moisture and oxygen while they store carbon forever in the leaves first, then the wood itself and finally in the soil. Forest insects feed the birds and pollinate crops. Absorbing carbon is just as important as reducing the use of the carbon stored millions of years ago.

Your dollar spent on land doesn't just end up as habitat for rare species, a pretty place or even a place to visit. That land is working for us. Nature brings visitors to rural areas. Carbon sequestered in trees is worth money, but severely under valued. Your dollar creates a stream of services worth a continuing stream of value to the local community and the country.

### An Acre of Land

Let's say you donate \$500. That costs you only \$300 after your tax savings. That \$500 gets multiplied by six after grants and land donations and is enough for us to acquire an acre of land. That acre of forest is worth \$1,800 every year or even \$4,200 if it is wetland. This calculation is according to a report called "Estimating Ecological Services in Southern Ontario," prepared by the consulting group SIG for Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. Your dollar helps us acquire \$6 worth of land and that same single dollar creates a stream of nature's services worth \$3.50 to \$8.20 every year thereafter.

Some economists dismiss such figures as "externalities" because they are not included in conventional financial statements or gross domestic product. Our ideas of progress, growth and societal well-being must be reformulated to account for the things we really need, like nature. Hundreds of studies showing nature makes us healthier can't be wrong. They shouldn't be ignored by politicians or business columnists or investors like you.

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◄ Some Escarpment land to be donated above Gowan Lake near Wiarnton.