

# Threats to the Niagara Escarpment



It may be that protections for nature that once seemed permanent and safe, can easily and swiftly be removed by a government in power. Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster*, is the current threat, as it requires conservation authorities, which may have lands on or near the Niagara Escarpment, to give up responsibility for protecting people from the dangers of development in wetlands. Increasingly, storms around the world are causing severe floods, and wetlands are known to mitigate disasters by absorbing and holding water. They also protect water quality. Eliminating the conservation authorities' role in considering development is a dangerous and foolish move. As seen in our feature on Bill 23 in this issue, the conservation

authorities are united in their opposition to this change.

Bill 23 also has proposed amendments that will remove lands from the Greenbelt Plan, in order to make them available for development. The Greenbelt Foundation and the Niagara Escarpment

Biosphere Network both oppose these amendments.

There is some support for these plans. Just a few days before Hazel McCallion died, she made a public statement in favour of removing 15 parcels of land from the Greenbelt Plan, in order to permit housing development there. This was surprising given that Ms. McCallion had been chair of the Greenbelt Council at the time, but was in keeping with her legacy of fully developing the fertile farmlands that became the City of Mississauga. Once nicknamed "the Queen of Sprawl," she did, however, say that she regretted not working more for higher density and public transit. She also once chaired a provincial panel on smart growth.

## Concerns About Bill 23

At the time I write this, serious concerns remain around Bill 23:

1. Ontario's integrity commissioner is investigating whether the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing did wrong in allowing development on Greenbelt lands.
2. It has been reported that the federal environment minister is considering intervening in the Greenbelt development plans, on the grounds that they work against necessary preparations for climate change.
3. If I remember correctly from a recent interview of the housing minister, conducted by TVO's Steven Paiken, only 10 per cent of the planned new housing is intended to be affordable. Yet I thought the main point of the housing crisis was a lack of affordable housing. Surely this isn't enough! What's clear is that the issues raised by Bill 23 are not over, and countless people and organizations oppose the bill, including the Chiefs of Ontario and First Nations. To read what some of these organizations have stated, see our feature article. Be sure also to read Bob Barnett's take on the Bill, in his regular view of land conservation.

## Lighter Content

Not all the content in this Spring issue is as heavy. For lighter, more enjoyable experiences, take an armchair tour of Short Hills Provincial Park, led and photographed by Art Weaver. He shares his impressive photos of birds, animals, plants and waterfalls from his frequent explorations here.

Another beautiful escape is provided by Greg Coman, a professional photographer with a love of nature. He shares some of his favourite landscapes and captures of wild animals in our feature look at his work.

For an intriguing glimpse into local prehistory, check out our feature piece on Brenda McEnery, who has amassed an amazing collection of stones that could perhaps have been used as tools by Indigenous people many, many centuries ago. Even if this can't be proven, many of her finds are simply beautiful.

As always, let me know what you think of our content, whether we're right or wrong, whether it was interesting or made you yawn! We love to hear from you.


*Gloria*

Gloria Hildebrandt

*P.S. Wild animals need wild spaces.*

The offices of *Niagara Escarpment Views* are located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, specifically The Ajetance Treaty No. 19, of 1818, when Chief Ajetance sold the lands to the Indian Department of the government.

## Let us know what you think!

Write us at [editor@NEViews.ca](mailto:editor@NEViews.ca) or  
 *Niagara Escarpment Views*,  
 50 Ann St.,  
 Georgetown ON L7G 2V2.

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