

Email To Members Re. Minister of Environment's Denial of Request For More Thorough Environmental Study of Marina Expansion

July 29 2015

Dear Friends of the Trumpeter Swans at LaSalle Park, Burlington

We are sorry to report that Minister of the Environment Glen Murray has turned down the request, made by the Trumpeter Swan Coalition, Conservation Halton and a private citizen, for a Part II Order, that would have allowed for a more extensive Environmental study to have been conducted for the proposed marina expansion and the building of a permanent break wall at LaSalle Park.

The letter from the Minister said in part: "Based on my review of the Environmental Study Report, and the issues you raised, an Individual Environmental Assessment is not required." We have attached his full response to this email.

However, he did impose the following conditions: "To create a Stakeholder Advisory Committee and invite the Part II Order requesters, including representatives from the Trumpeter Swan Coalition, to participate. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee will meet as required as the Project progresses with the goal of working together to resolve concerns with the Project's potential effects on the environment. The Proponents will also be required to prepare an Aquatic and Terrestrial Environment Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, in consultation with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee in order to identify and address any potential impacts from the Project on the aquatic environment and/or overwintering Trumpeter Swans in the vicinity of the Project.

The area of the Trumpeter Swan Coalition's greatest concern was the potential impact a 400 m long break wall, constructed by dumping 10,000 tons of rock into the harbor, would have on the ability of the over-wintering Trumpeters to reach the aquatic vegetation that is the mainstay of their diet. The LaSalle Park harbor is normally free of ice for most of the winter because of the wave action in the harbour. Researchers have seen the impact of the Trumpeter Swan population from the past two severe winters where the harbour was iced over for many weeks and the Swans couldn't access the harbour's plants. There was higher winter mortality followed by less summer fertility with fewer cygnets reported last year than in previous years.

We ask what good will "monitoring" impacts do? If the break wall proves to cause the harbour to regularly freeze over for long periods and the population of overwintering Trumpeters starts to significantly decline, if their fertility is impacted and the Provincial population, barely at 1,000 birds after more than 30+ of reintroduction and conservation work, starts to decline, do you think they will disassemble the break wall, remove the 10,000 tons of rock and move the marina? Fat chance.

We are “monitoring” species literally to death in this Province.

There are 219 species on Ontario’s Endangered Species list. Despite monitoring, despite legislation, despite fine words and fond wishes, despite promises of habitat protection, the number of species on that list keeps increasing. No level of government is doing what it should to protect the environment.

The Minister and the proponents of the LaSalle Marina have underestimated the importance of protecting this unique habitat, chosen by the Trumpeters themselves, that uniquely provide the right food at the right depth, some shelter from northerly and easterly winds, open flight paths and a beach where they can rest.

Virtually every inch of the Great Lakes shores have been altered by humans, destroying the kind of habitat Trumpeters would traditionally have made use of. The Trumpeters that have ventured down to the United States, trying to find suitable habitat, are met, like they are by most place in our province, by drained marshes, highways, suburban sprawl and shoreline development including marinas. Many Trumpeters who venture south never return. Whether they succumb to lead poisoning from accidentally ingesting lead shot, get shot by hunters or have collisions with powerlines or the many other obstacles along the way, we don’t know but what we do know is that about ¼ of Ontario’s reintroduced Trumpeter Swan population has found LaSalle Park Marina, as it currently exists, to be good winter habitat. If it is altered, where can they go?

From the Minister’s letter, it is clear he also did not understand the importance of LaSalle Park as a place for people who enjoy the quiet, passive enjoyment of nature through nature walks, bird-watching, photography and viewing an unobstructed vista of the lake. He dismissed concerns about the thousands of people who enjoy LaSalle as a quiet place where they can passively enjoy nature, an unobstructed view of the lake and take photographs because people can “swim and sunbathe” (?) elsewhere.

With 330 permanent boat slips, a rock break wall stretching virtually all across the harbour and enlarged parking lot, that view, and that peaceful place, will be gone forever.

But, it’s not over yet. The LaSalle Park Marina Association still has to come up with the money to build it (about \$10 million or more). And since they have said they don’t have the money, they will be looking for a Federal grant or a loan from the City of Burlington.

Also, as we have said from the beginning, the marina cannot be built unless it has the approval of the City of Burlington. Ultimately, this will be the City Council’s decision. Residents of Burlington, you need to let your Council know what you think.

Please, please, please, email Burlington's City Council addressed to the Mayor and Council at cob@burlington.ca It is important that the Mayor and all Councillors hear your thoughts, not just your local Councillor. Of course it does no harm to email your individual Council a separate note as well. For information about contacting individual Councillors, for phone numbers and mailing addresses go to www.burlington.ca

You may also want to contact Burlington's Federal MP Mike Wallace to let him know that you do not support federal tax dollars going to the building of a marina at LaSalle Park. You can email him through his website at <http://www.mikewallacemp.ca> You can write him at: **Burlington Mall, 777 Guelph Line, Suite 209 Burlington, Ont. L7R 3N2** You can call him at: 905-639-5757.

We would appreciate if you would copy the Trumpeter Swan Coalition on your letters to Council or MP Wallace.

In September, we will be organizing a meeting of the Trumpeter Swan Coalition to organize further actions. As soon as we have a date, we will let you know.

The Trumpeter Swan Coalition

905-562-3819