

# Urban Sprawl and Climate Change Threaten Lake Simcoe

## *New Study a prelude to action planning events around the lake*

(Keswick, ON July 12, 2006) An in-depth investigative report published by The Windfall Ecology Centre points to population growth and climate change as leading risk factors for the sustainability of the Lake Simcoe watershed. The landmark study, co-sponsored by the Ladies of the Lake (LOL), a grass roots women's organization that last year drew national attention to Lake Simcoe by baring all in an extraordinary 2006 calendar, will provide important background science for a series of citizen action planning events taking place around the lake this summer.

The exhaustive eighty-eight page report, entitled 'The Naked Truth, Going Behind the Science of Lake Simcoe', encompassed a review and analysis of scientific research, case studies, and targeted interviews and marks the first time that all the various indicators of change around Lake Simcoe have been gathered together 'under one roof' and explained in simple terms.

Brent Kopperson, Executive Director of the Windfall Ecology Centre says, "Our investigation revealed many 'canaries in our coal mine' such as wild trout that are on the verge of disappearing, stocked fish that cannot reproduce, and declining frog and turtle populations signalling the loss of critical biodiversity.'

The findings reflect a growing imbalance in the eco-system of Lake Simcoe and the watershed caused by a myriad of factors, all of which have one thing in common – human activity.

According to Hilary Van Welter, Chair of the Windfall Ecology Centre, 'When we first began this research, we knew we would come across issues such as phosphorus loading and invasive species. When we came across so many interrelated issues we shifted our thinking and saw the issues as indicators of a bigger picture. The symptoms all lead back to the more pervasive situations facing communities today.'

While the impacts of urban sprawl on the watershed are well known, the local impact of global warming is less clear. Jose Etcheverry, from the David Suzuki Foundation, says that 'growing evidence suggests that the climate in the Great Lakes region is changing. Winters are getting shorter, annual average temperatures are growing warmer, extreme heat events are occurring more frequently, and the duration of lake ice cover is decreasing as air and water temperatures rise.' The Windfall Ecology Centre study highlights the urgent need for further research on the local impacts of global warming.

One very clear and positive aspect of the new report is that it demonstrates that individuals, business, and governments acting together can build sustainable communities. The study examines stories from other watershed areas that have managed to put in place successful remedial action plans – including Russia and Africa. 'What intrigued us about these case studies is that they have one thing in common,' says Annabel Slaight, co-founder of the Ladies of the Lake. 'It took citizens working with government to bring about action.'

The results of this study are going to be shared with citizens from around Lake Simcoe this coming weekend in four action planning events. The Report comes in two forms, an illustrative written report, and a set of Naked Truth Cards that provide the highlights in bite-size pieces. The full report can be downloaded at [www.windfallcentre.ca](http://www.windfallcentre.ca) or [www.lakeladies.ca](http://www.lakeladies.ca)