

Legacy Campaign looks back on 2015

The legacy campaign of the Stop the Quarry movement, Food and Water First, (FAWF) continues to lobby for farmland and source water protection, and reports 2015 as an active year for the organization.

It was the International Year of Soils in 2015 which brought the importance of Ontario's farmland to the forefront of the public's attention. "As we continue in our campaign for better farmland protection, many more Ontarians are appreciating the immediate and long term benefits of eating fresh, local food and supporting a sustainable and resilient food system," said Shirley Boxem the Chair of Food and Water First.

Organizers attended a number of events in 2015, including the Green Living Show in Toronto, and report hundreds of new supporters. More locally, the group held a fundraiser: "Barnfest" near Shelburne. The former Chair of NDACT, Carl Cosack participated in the Sacred Water Walk on the shores of Lake Simcoe.

Most recently, FAWF put out a public call to press the government for effective changes to the Aggregate Resources Act ensuring protection for prime farmland in Ontario. "It was the activity of NDACT and the support of thousands that triggered the review of the sorely outdated legislation in the first place," said Boxem.

However, "2015 ends with some unfinished business," said the Chair, "We're still awaiting the "Farms Forever" program in Ontario," as announced by Premier Wynne as part of her election platform. Boxem said, "The federal Liberals have vowed to finally put an end to the 40-year fight over the Pickering Airport," so FAWT is "looking forward to good news for Land Over Landings" people who have been fighting the appropriation of prime farmland for the development for many years.

Boxem told the Free Press that with the coordinated land review still in progress, the fate of the Greenbelt is still uncertain. "Our wonderful supporters helped us with letters to the government, calling for a stronger and expanded Greenbelt and participated in the demand that federal candidates do more to protect the Pickering Lands," said Boxem.

She encourages all Ontarians to "continue speaking up and making our voices heard," and to stay connected with Food and Water First for opportunities to be actively involved in the protection of food land and water. "Thank you for all that you do, and thank you to our terrific team," said Shirley Boxem, "I wish all of you the very best in 2016!"

By Marni Walsh