

Council opposes provincial legislation, cites environmental protection concerns

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Shelburne Town Council is opposing a newly proposed piece of legislation that seeks to change environmental protections and municipal planning procedures within Ontario.

During their meeting on May 12, Shelburne Councillor Len Guchardi brought forward a motion to oppose Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025, which was introduced by the provincial government in April.

In his motion, Coun. Guchardi said the proposed piece of legislation is "undermining environmental protections" and "compromising the integrity of municipal planning procedures."

The Ford government announced Bill 5 in April, and pitched the piece of legislation as a way to "cut the red tape and duplicative processes that have held back major infrastructure, mining and resource development projects."

If enacted, the new legislation would give the province the ability to create special economic zones, exempting businesses and projects from environmental protections or municipal rules. Specific legislative protections at risk include: the Endangered Species Act, Environmental Protection Act, Environmental Assessment Act, Mining Act, Ontario Heritage Act, and the Species Conservation Act.

"While I fully support the need to build more housing and strengthen our local economy, it must never come at the cost of the environment or thoughtful local decision-making," said Coun. Guchardi.

The Town of Shelburne sits within the jurisdiction of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA).

The NVCA is a not-for-profit organization focused on preserving the environment, protecting the watershed from natural hazards, and managing water resources within the Nottawasaga Valley watershed.

The Nottawasaga Valley watershed is approximately 3,700 square kilometres and has jurisdiction in 18 municipalities in the counties of Simcoe, Dufferin and Grey. Dufferin County municipalities situated in the Nottawasaga Watershed include Amaranth, Melancthon, Mono, Mulmur and Shelburne.

"It opens us up to an awful lot in terms of eroding the environmental protections that we currently have," concluded Guchardi.

Shelburne Town Council voted unanimously in support of the motion to oppose Bill 5. The Town of Shelburne had until May 17 to submit their comments on the proposed bill.