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The Right Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Dalton McGuinty;

I am writing to you to express my concern about a proposed project which has been approved by your government (through the Ontario Ministry of the Environment) and by a local municipal governing body, the Council of the County of Simcoe. The proposal is to build a solid waste landfill near Elmvale, in Tiny Township, Simcoe County on a parcel of land known as Site 41.

My office has been inundated with emails and telephone calls about this proposed landfill project. Most are expressing concerns about construction of this landfill because it would sit on, and in, a major aquifer (the Alliston Aquifer) that supplies drinking water to local residents. The aquifer is also a source of clean, cold water to the Wye River (a cold water fishery) and surrounding marshes that support important wildlife species. The aquifer also provides important ecosystem services for the region like water retention, filtration and storage (Wilson, 2008).

It appears that in order for this project to proceed, as much as 225 million litres of clean, pure groundwater would need to be pumped out of the ground in the vicinity of the proposed landfill site and disposed of prior to construction. Over the life of the landfill, even more water groundwater would have to be pumped out of the ground annually to maintain its structural integrity.

There is also the concern that, over the long term, the integrity of this landfill might become compromised (liner failure, plugged drainage infrastructure) to the point where landfill leachates could end up leaking into the surrounding water table causing widespread contamination of the aquifer.

It is my understanding that some of the citizens of Simcoe County and First Nations people from the area have been advocating for almost 30 years that the County and the provincial government explore other options to manage the waste destined for this site other than building new landfills. Implementing waste reduction strategies, upgrading existing landfills, and investing in improved recycling of eligible products in older landfills have all been proposed.

I want you to know that the David Suzuki Foundation supports the call for local municipal, provincial and federal governments to use alternative means of dealing with waste other than land-filling it wherever possible. This is especially important where valuable freshwater and ecosystem services would be degraded by landfill creation and maintenance.

I get repeated requests from people all across the country for help in dealing with landfill siting issues. All too often landfills come forward as the preferred solution for dealing with waste because the costs of land-filling appear low when compared to other methods of waste management and disposal. However, this is usually the result of not factoring the value of ecosystem goods and services, both in the present and over the longer term, into the cost-benefit analyses when it comes to assessing overall operational costs.

Until this dynamic is changed, we will continue to have situations where there will be conflict over appropriate land-use and land-filling will continue to impact our environment and our health.

I am asking you and your government to halt any further construction on this landfill and focus on developing and implementing reasonable alternatives to dealing with the waste that would otherwise be dumped there.

I look forward to your reply. Please feel free to contact either Dr. Faisal Moola or Jay Ritchlin at the David Suzuki Foundation if you have questions about this request.

Sincerely,



Dr. David Suzuki

Cc: The Honourable John Gerretsen, Ontario Minister of Environment

Tony Guergis, Warden of Simcoe County and Simcoe County Councillors

Peggy Breckenridge, Mayor, Township of TINY

Dr. Faisal Moola, Director of Science and Terrestrial Conservation

Jay Ritchlin, Director of Marine and Freshwater Conservation

### **Literature Cited**

Wilson, S.J. 2008. Lake Simcoe Basin's Natural Capital: The Value of the Watershed's Ecosystem Services. Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation Occasional Paper Series No. 6. June 2008. 45 pages.