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## **LEITRIM WETLANDS SET FOR DESTRUCTION ENVIRONMENTALISTS DECRY “SHODDY” ANALYSIS**

Ottawa—Environmental groups, both local and national, scientists, and naturalists have denounced the Screening Report on Leitrim Wetlands issued on June 18 by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Leitrim Wetlands is a Class 1 provincial wetland located near Albion Road in Gloucester, Ontario. It is home to several rare and threatened species, and boasts an old growth forest, including white pine in which Great Blue Heron nest. The wetland is threatened with a massive housing development, bringing sprawl, cars and new municipal infrastructure to accommodate what is essentially a new town.

“This is like plunking a town the size of Perth into a fragile ecosystem,” said Mike Lascelles of Environment Committee of Ottawa South.

In addition to the air pollution and increased greenhouse gas problem created by thousands of new commuters, the destruction of the wetland will likely liberate over one million metric tons of carbon dioxide, and large amounts of methane and nitrous oxide currently locked up in the wetland. “Where is the federal government’s famous Kyoto lens on this project?” asked Elizabeth May, Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Canada. “The Screening Report makes no mention of the climate change implications of this mega-development.”

In addition to drawing down the water table and draining the wetland, the changed hydrogeology is acknowledged to increase the risk of migrating toxic chemicals from an adjacent Transport Canada toxic waste site. “In simple terms, these houses will be built on a swamp, with contaminated ground water close by,” said Daniel Green, Science advisor to the Sierra Club of Canada. “It is about the worst place one could imagine building a massive housing development.”

“Incredibly, Natural Resources Canada urged that further and better studies be done

before allowing the project to proceed,” said Albert Dugal of Friends of Leirrim Wetlands. “DFO has ignored that advice and allowed the proponent, the City of Ottawa, to commit to a monitoring programme which is inadequate on its face.”

“This report has almost no analysis. It is just B,L,T: bullets, lists and tables. It is pure description, with no actual review of environmental risks,” said Philip Martin, of Ottawa Field Naturalists. “There is no clear apportionment of responsibility, nor are there any cost estimates. Who is ultimately liable if their rosy projections are not met in reality?”

“The Hon. Robert Thibault has a fateful decision to make. Does this project receive a rubber stamp, or does Minister Thibault ensure it receives a full public panel review?” asked Heather Hamilton, Executive Coordinator of the Canadian Biodiversity Institute.

The Screening Report can be found on the Government of Canada website at: [www.fish-habitat.com/leitrim](http://www.fish-habitat.com/leitrim). Comments must be received by July 17.

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