



6th August 2012

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed airport development in Toronto Harbour that I have been alerted to.

Toronto Harbour is clearly both ecologically and economically incredibly important to the surrounding communities, and indeed the nation, but coastal development has long been encroaching into the environment, reducing natural habitats and having a devastating impact on the wildlife they support. Although coastal development is unavoidable, it should not be to the detriment of the environment.

Coastal dredging and land reclamation, regardless of whatever precautions are taken (such as silt curtains etc.), always comes at an environmental cost. Excess fine sediment can quickly cover huge areas of the seabed, literally suffocating the plant life that it supports.

Shallow seabed areas, such as those found here, are incredibly important to fish life. They are the nursery areas for juvenile fish that are imperative to commercial fisheries. These shallows are where juvenile fish develop into adults, safe in the protection of a sheltered location, away from larger predators. The loss of these shallow nursery ground areas is likely to have a significant impact on the connectivity between shallow and deeper seabed zones – by disrupting fish spawning sites and nursery grounds, the natural cycle of fish reproduction will be severely disrupted.

The rationale of dumping excess shale and waste excavation material which could maintain marine life is not supported by any evidence; in fact it will not create any sort of habitat, but rather will only take away the existing habitat. Marine flora and fauna have specific habitat requirements and specially selected materials are required for the creation of artificial reef structures and other forms of underwater habitats. The biggest requirement is that of space for shelter; marine creatures need crevices to hide from predators, and shale would be a completely inappropriate material to use to create an artificial underwater habitat. Having worked as a marine scientist all around the world for over a decade, I can justifiably say that I have seen successful artificial reefs and unsuccessful ones, and only through extensive location-specific research is it possible to create underwater habitats that are beneficial to marine fauna.

There is no question that the proposed airport development will have severe and irreversible detrimental impacts on the diverse marine ecosystem supported by the Harbour.

Yours Faithfully,

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