



The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Date: December 3, 2020

Media Release Date: Immediate

From: Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Subject: Dune Excavation on Lakeshore Boulevard, Sauble Beach, Ontario

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation is calling on the Town of South Bruce Peninsula to halt its plan to excavate a significant portion of its coastal dune system until the proposed project is given a thorough, independent scientific assessment. We urge the Mayor and Council to pause all work on this project until its full implications and long-term consequences – environmental and economic – can be evaluated.

The current proposal at Lakeshore Boulevard in Sauble Beach, is to cut a 469-metre strip through sensitive dunes, and install a concrete retaining wall risks doing irreversible damage to a precious economic and environmental asset. There is abundant scientific evidence on the risks of tampering with natural ecosystems. As a science-based organization, the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation has serious concerns that the proposed work could have multiple negative long-term impacts to the shoreline and its residents including:

- A) **compromising the natural flood and erosion protection provided by the dune system, potentially putting infrastructure and private residences at risk.**
- B) **accelerating sand loss from the beach through wind erosion, causing deposition onto the road.**
- C) **decreasing the resilience of the beach and contribute to its long-term degradation, reducing the sand quality and increasing wind exposure, making the beach less desirable for tourism.**

The proposed work has the ability to jeopardize the natural protection from storms and flooding currently provided to Lakeshore Boulevard, and the 149 lakefront properties at Sauble Beach. The value of a beach and dune system as shore protection has been estimated at about \$3,000 per linear meter, and does not include the aesthetic value of the dunes which contributes to the local tourism economy. Given the unknown impacts of a changing climate, removing that

protection carries significant financial risks to the Town and its residents, as well as uncertain implications for the long-term health of the beach.

Excavation of sand dunes is particularly concerning on beaches of northern Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Beaches in this region are primarily geologic relics, meaning there are not enough sources in the area to replace the sand if it erodes, or is taken to a landfill. The consequences of excavating sand dunes cannot be undone. This proposed work has the ability to reduce the sand quality and increase wind exposure, which can make the beach less desirable for the tourism industry. Revenue from beach visitation has been estimated at \$15-40 spent per day trip.

On Dec. 3, the Coastal Centre Board released a Position Statement providing evidence-based background on some of the issues surrounding sand excavation, the hardening of sand dune ecosystems, and the long-term economic and environmental implications of these actions. This statement can be found on our website at lakehuron.ca.

We also encourage the Town to carefully consider the detailed information included in the *Independent Review of the Sauble Beach Dune Retaining Wall* prepared by experts Pete Zuzek and Dr. Mary-Louise Byrne. Alternative solutions are available that would not inflict damage of unknown proportions on the Town's most valuable asset.

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation (LHCCC), is a non-government charitable organization with the goals of protecting and restoring Lake Huron's coastal environment, and supporting a healthy coastal ecosystem through education, restoration, and research projects.

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