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July 25th, 2011

Mayor John Henry
City of Oshawa
50 Centre Street South
Oshawa, Ontario
L1H 3Z7

Dear Mayor Henry,

I am writing to express the David Suzuki Foundation's support for your opposition to the proposed ethanol fuel production facility to be located in the port of Oshawa. Our position is based on several reasons, most importantly the Foundation's opposition to using corn-based ethanol as a substitute for gasoline due to its tenuous environmental benefits and considerable disadvantages.

Ethanol is sometimes described as environmentally friendly by industry stakeholders, based on the argument that the feedstock for ethanol production, such as corn, sucks up carbon dioxide when it grows. However, when one looks at the full life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of using ethanol, the benefit is at best very modest—in some cases, it can actually be worse than burning gasoline.

There are also real drawbacks related to using grains such as corn for ethanol production. The most important may be the competition that is set up between using grains to feed people versus using grains to fuel cars. Rising food prices over the last few years have, in part, been attributed to the increased use of corn and other grains for ethanol production, and these rising prices have led to food insecurity and even food riots in several places in the world. Research published in the prestigious journal *Science* in 2007 shows that displacing even just 10% of the world's gasoline with corn-based ethanol would require 40% of the cropland in Europe and North America, and no doubt even greater impacts on the price of basic food staples and food security in the world.

Corn-based ethanol also has some other significant environmental impacts. For example, a considerable amount of water is required to produce corn-based ethanol, even more water than the already excessive amount needed to produce the equivalent amount of gasoline.

For all these reasons, the David Suzuki Foundation favours the use of cellulosic ethanol—which uses residues from agriculture or forestry for its feedstock—rather than



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corn-based ethanol. Cellulosic ethanol production has much greater greenhouse gas benefits, has little to no impact on food supplies, and has a lower environmental impact than corn-based ethanol.

In the case of the proposed corn-based ethanol production plant in the port of Oshawa, there are other, more local environmental factors that make this project proposal even less attractive. Quite possibly the most important is the plant's potential impact on Second Marsh, the largest remaining urban wetland in the Greater Toronto Area. The ethanol plant's location, adjacent to Second Marsh, would threaten the wetlands renowned for its rich biodiversity and recognized by the province of Ontario for its cultural heritage.

In short, the David Suzuki Foundation believes that the Province of Ontario and the City of Oshawa need to move away from the production and use of corn-based ethanol and explore more sustainable commercial opportunities that would benefit both its community and the environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Marshall".

Dale Marshall, Climate Change Policy Analyst
David Suzuki Foundation