

Dykes officially completed here

By Jim Merriam

To say the Paisley dykes were officially opened Monday afternoon would not be totally correct. As one speaker noted, you can get more than you bargained for when you "open" dykes.

But the official completion of the major seven-year dyking project in the village was marked at a ceremony in the Paisley Community Centre. The ceremony had been scheduled for a spot along the dykes, but poor weather conditions forced officials of the organizing Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority to move it inside.

The project is really not quite complete, with one flap gate still to be installed and some site restoration and landscaping set for next year. But the system has been providing protection for some parts of the community for more than two years.

One of the driving forces behind the dyking project, John Bryce of Elderslie Township, past chairman and a veteran member of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, briefly outlined the flooding problems in Paisley. He traced it to the first pioneers, who picked the junctions of the Saugeen and Teeswater Rivers and Willow Creek in the village as the site for their first settlement. That was in 1851 and as early as 1858 a major flood was reported in a Toronto newspaper that told of water flowing "over the counter in some stores".

Mr. Bryce also said that long-time residents of Paisley found a year unusual if they didn't have trouble with the river.

But it was the most recent major flood, in 1977, that most remember for its serious damage to homes and businesses in Paisley. That is the one that really provided the impetus for the current dyking project.

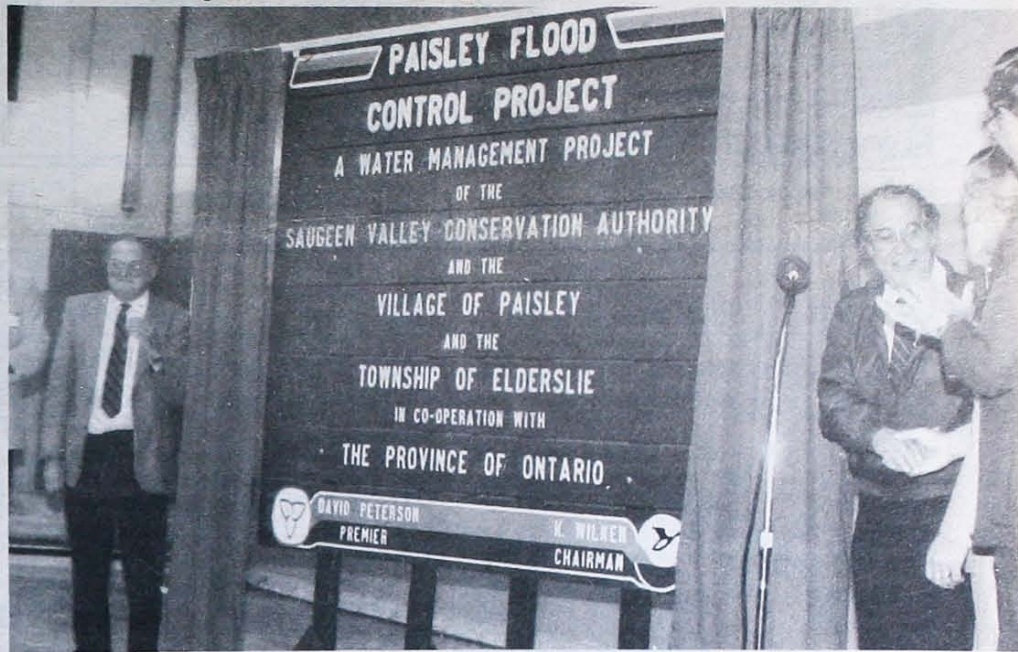
Most speakers at Monday's ceremony mentioned the importance of co-operation in getting the project completed. A passage in the official program summed up this feature by saying: "Without the contributions of the Ontario Government, the Village of Paisley, the Township of Elderslie and the communities' residents during each stage, the construction of such an extensive system of flood control dykes would not have been possible. For their patience and support, new opportunities are once again being presented... the beginnings of a new chapter." The statistics surrounding the dyking project are impressive to say the least. A total of 3km of dykes has been installed, costing close to \$3 million total, with 85 per cent of that being paid by the provincial government. Paisley paid the majority of the balance, with Elderslie Township also contributing, as some of the dykes extend past the boundaries of the village. One example of the scope of the project comes from the fact that a total of 30,000 truck loads of clay were brought in to build the dykes.

Karl Wilken, chairman of the SVCA assured those present that the authority did not engineer the successful testing of the dykes Sept. 13, when seven inches of rain fell in the watershed in the space of 36 hours. He introduced Rev. William McCaig of Paisley United Church, who said he was present "on behalf of the folks who organized the Sept. 13 test". He spoke of the importance of water to humans and offered a prayer of dedication.

Guest speaker at the event was Ontario Natural Resources Minister Vince Kerrio. He called the dyking an "impressive piece of work, and more extensive than I had visualized".

He noted that the dykes will protect structures and property with an estimated value of \$7 million. That includes over 550 residents and 200 buildings, he said.

Praising the local municipalities and people involved in



The official completion of Paisley's flood control project was observed, Monday. Among the speakers were John Bryce, below, a major force behind the project, and Ontario Minister of Natural Resources, Vince Kerrio, below right. Jim Merriam Photos

