

No money for escarpment

Province a 'Scrooge' with funding

Herald special
Scrooge has nothing on the Ontario government when it comes to penny-pinching over funding for the Niagara Escarpment, a group of environmentalists told a Queen's Park press conference last week.

CONE (Coalition of the Niagara Escarpment) supports many of the recommendations made by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) in its proposed plan, released last week, according to spokesmen for the group, but nevertheless has some strong words for the Ontario government.

"This government has been outsourcing Scrooge on funding for escarpment lands", CONE chairman Lyn MacMillan said.

"It is nothing less than hypocrisy to repeatedly assure the public of your commitment, while at the same time chopping the necessary funds from the escarpment program," she said.

DRIED UP
Government acquisition of property has completely dried

up and grants provided to conservation authorities have been cut off, Ms. MacMillan noted.

"CONE agrees with much of the new plan; its protection of natural areas from urban development, the comprehensive parkland plan and management policy and its call for renewed funding at \$5 million a year for five years - but the group says policies to control pits and quarries are seriously inadequate," she charged.

Spokesman Ron Reid said the plan makes no recommendations for relocating existing quarries, "even where outstanding ecological areas are directly threatened."

"The commission appears to have swallowed the myths perpetuated by the aggregate industry and the ministry of natural resources that existing licensed areas, no matter how massive or how damaging, cannot be touched," Mr. Reid said.

Generally, Mr. Reid added, the plan is much simpler than preliminary proposals. Be-

cause of its simplicity, he said, the commission has ignored a number of areas which are an integral part of escarpment development, including agriculture, scenic drives, utility corridors, heritage protection and the Bruce Trail.

UP TO TORIES
CONE believes the success or failure of Niagara Escarpment development lies squarely with the provincial government, spokesmen stressed.

"The escarpment has had no shortage of plans in the past; what has been lacking is strong, consistent support from the province to make these plans work," Ms. MacMillan said.

A year ago, Ontario committed \$1 million to land acquisition, but Ms. MacMillan claimed nothing has been spent to date.

HEALTH CARE
Last week, Premier Bill Davis told the Legislature that the government doesn't have sufficient capital to "do all the things that are necessary," faced, as it is, with various priorities, headed by health care needs.

Mr. Reid noted, though, that the \$5 million a year proposed by the commission is "very small when compared with the health budget."

"The province needs to clarify its position," he said. "What provincial body will oversee implementation of the plan, reviewing planning amendments and co-ordinating

provincial actions?"
CONE also wants some assurances that the province will provide adequate funding and will have some control over development on the escarpment.

Mr. Reid said CONE would

have no objection to giving municipalities some control over development if the province has "a strong overseeing role".

CONE wants Ontario to lay all its cards on the table before public hearings begin.

"We urge the province to make its plans clear on the future of the escarpment commission or what alternative it sees for carrying out the provincial role during implementation," Ms. MacMillan said.

NEC quarry policies disappointing: CONE

Environmental groups along the Niagara Escarpment are critical of the quarrying policies contained in the Niagara Escarpment Commission's master plan for the escarpment.

Lyn MacMillan, chairman of the Coalition of the Niagara Escarpment (CONE) told a press conference in Toronto last week that the Niagara Escarpment Commission's (NEC's) master plan for the escarpment "fails to deal effectively" with quarrying. Mrs. MacMillan said quarrying operations are "one of the most destructive activities" on the escarpment, and the NEC policies on quarrying are CONE's "great disappointment" in the area of environmental protection.

Mrs. MacMillan said the commission's policies, if back-

ed by the province, will prolong the "chewing away" of the escarpment's natural areas instead of eventually closing down quarrying on the escarpment.

Most of the quarrying operations along the escarpment are located in Halton and Peel. Under the NEC proposals, the existing licensed quarries will remain, and two new ones will be allowed to open, both of them in the town of Caledon. That will bring the total of quarrying operations in the

two regions to about 25, not including temporary wayside pits.

CONE, which claims to represent 500,000 members, includes representatives from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Pollution Probe, the Foundation for Aggregate Studies, the Sierra Club of Ontario, the National and Provincial Parks Association, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Soil Conservation Society of America and the Federation of Hiking Trail Associations.

Trail association is re-organizing

Herald special
The Ontario government is using the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) as an excuse for stalling land acquisition along the 430-mile Bruce Trail, according to NEC member Ray Lowes.

As well as serving on the NEC, Mr. Lowes is secretary of the Bruce Trail Association.

"I expect the government will continue with this policy and it will be another two years before a permanent trail is approved," Mr. Lowes charged following last week's Queen's Park press conference.

The association is in a process of reorganization and soon will be working on its own, if need be, toward establishing a trail through the escarpment, he pointed out.

Mr. Lowes said the association will soon appoint an executive-director, whose main responsibility will be to deal with landowners along the trail.

"We will have an executive-director to talk with landowners, but no money to spend," he complained.

The ministry of natural resources has promised \$20,000 to the association to help with reorganization until March, 1980, according to Mr. Lowes and will contribute another \$50,000 per year for three years thereafter.

The money is to be used for internal use, rather than land purchase.

Last week, the NEC recommended that the association should work with the Ontario government, landowners and municipalities to establish the trail.

The new recommendation is somewhat less controversial than preliminary ones which called for expropriation of some property along the trail.

Some landowners, furious with talk of expropriation, cancelled agreements with the association, leaving the group to find alternative routes for the trail.

Mr. Lowes contended that the government could have avoided the problems if it had started purchasing land five years ago.

Now the government and association are faced with ne-

gotiating with landowners, some of whom may be less than co-operative, he said.

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