

Environment minister sets priorities early

By ARLIN HACKMAN

Federation of Ontario Naturalists Ontario's new Environment Minister, the Honourable Andrew Brandt, wasted no time in setting his priorities. Unfortunately, his recent refusal to initiate an environmental assessment of the Obonga Lake forest access road shows that environmental protection does not head the list.

The notion of a forest access road may spark images of a picturesque trail winding through the woods. In reality, the Obonga Lake Road under construction north of Thunder Bay is an all-weather industry highway, which carves a wide swath through the forest, and allows huge logging trucks to pass at high speed. Far from benign, these roads disrupt fish and wildlife habitat and cause serious erosion and sedimentation, with consequent effects on water quality.

On the economic side these are obvious benefits. In remote areas road access opens the door to development. Sound forest management, requires extensive road networks. And this access may also serve a variety of recreational pursuits. But all these benefits only add up, and exceed the costs, if there is a lot of careful planning before construction begins. Otherwise any particular road, let alone the poorly planned networks which criss-cross Northern Ontario, can cause land use conflicts and

resource depletion.

The Obonga Lake road is one of many examples. Being built into virgin territory, at public expense, to help Domtar salvage some aging timber, it is in reality being used to get at much younger wood which should not be cut now. In the process, traplines, fish spawning areas and remote tourist operations are being sacrificed. Though he acknowledged the validity of these concerns, Mr. Brandt quickly rejected a request from local outfitters, conservationists, and their MPP for an environmental assessment. He also chose not to seek the counsel of the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee, established for this purpose.

The buck must ultimately stop at the desk of Natural Resources Minister Alan Pope, whose department is responsible for the sorry state of forest management planning in this province. However Mr. Brandt had a perfect opportunity, and the mandate, to take the initiative in finding a remedy for this particular problem and spur his colleague to action. He chose not to take it.

Perhaps ongoing public pressure, including some from his own advisory committee, will cause him to reconsider. That is to be hoped, because the Obonga situation is far from unique and Ontario deserves more than a "Minister of Exemptions" as defender of the environment.

Halton Region opposes farmland plan

Herald Special

A proposal for 18 estate residential homes on part of a farm east of Acton does not meet Halton Region's aim to support agriculture as a viable industry.

Nor does the proposal support a policy to keep non-farm development off good farmland, an Ontario municipal board has been told.

Regional planner Sharon Johnston told the board that the region does support the residential development in the rural areas of Halton but such developments should happen where they will have the least impact on agricultural uses.

She said any plan should be supported by studies showing need and they should be compatible with surrounding community uses.

Ms. Johnston said the region's agricultural expert had determined that 70 per cent of the land in the 99.9 acre farm at the west half of lot 27, Concession 6, was Classes 1 to 4 soil. The land is being farmed.

The developer's decision to sell 23 acres of good farmland to the west of the proposed development site to a neighboring farmer is an attempt to mitigate the region's objection to the proposal, Ms. Johnston said.

Almond Development Ltd. began proposing estate residential homes on the site in 1973, said Halton Hills planner Ian Keith. The original proposal was turned down in 1976 because of possible conflicts with the future plan for the Niagara Escarpment Area. When that was revealed in draft form in 1978, the farm was not in the escarpment planning area and that problem was dropped.

—Courtesy Guelph Mercury



Katherine Johnson, 11, and Dale Verhaegen, 9, were among the knights in shining armor who took to the streets of Acton on behalf of the dramatic arts summer program. The rec department closed its season of fun for the kids with a parade and arcade in the community.

Stage is set

The stage is set for free performances of Bertholt Brecht's classic play, "The Good Woman of Setzuan", at Black Creek Pioneer Village, on Wednesday, August 24 and Thursday, August 25, beginning at 2 p.m.

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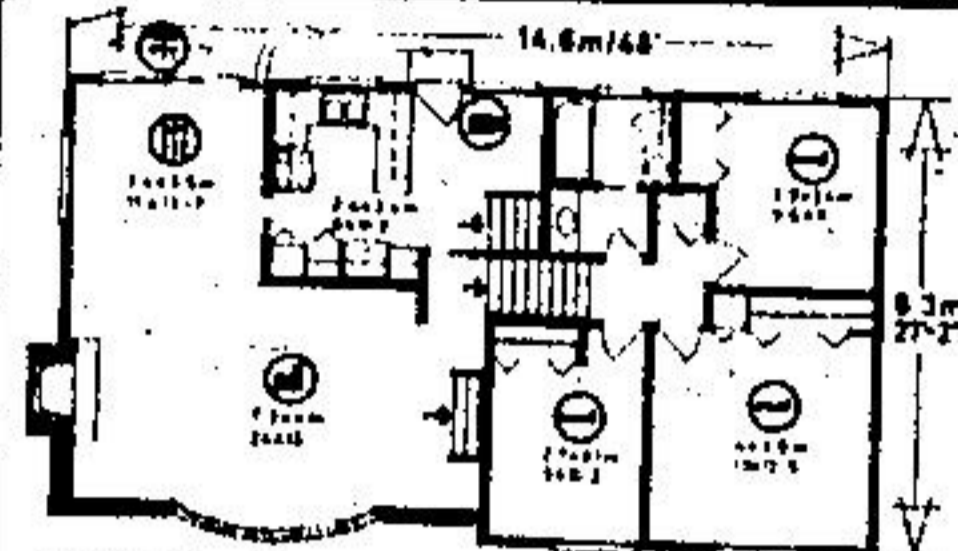
The Corvina 91 12-pack Ball Point Pen at \$1.47 shown on page 12 are not available. In its place we will have a card of Venus Ball Pens.

We regret any inconvenience this may have caused our customers.

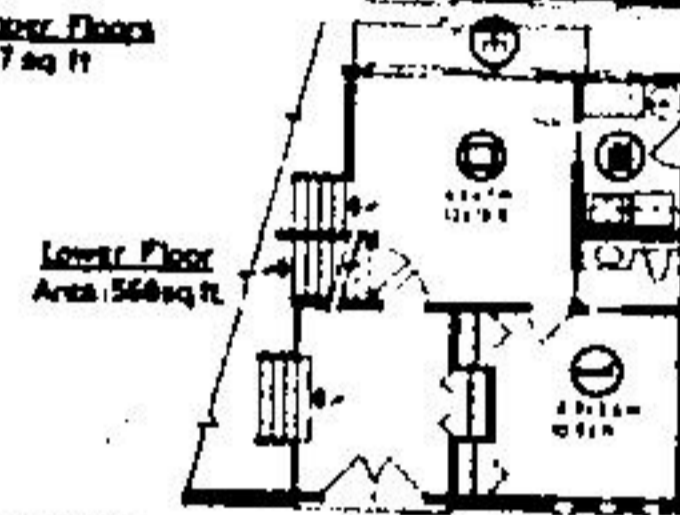
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