

# Scotsdale Farm tree-cutting condemned by MPP Duignan

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

Halton North M.P.P. Noel Duignan is among the growing number of politicians and citizens who are opposed to the cutting of century-old trees at Georgetown's publicly-owned Scotsdale Farm.

"It shouldn't be allowed to happen," said Mr. Duignan. Although he hasn't visited the site of the cutting, he said it's "shameful" that numerous trees, including 215-year-old Beech trees and eight-foot-wide Ash trees, have been cut down.

The controversy surrounding the cutting of the trees began early this year when neighbors of Scotsdale Farms took a walk through the farm's woodlot and saw huge piles of timber located throughout the forest.

Neighbor Nelson Hogg called the Halton Hills Herald to say how saddened he was that this beautiful mature woodlot was being "slaughtered".

He alerted the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON) who issued a press release which stated "the Ontario Heritage Foundation (which holds the land in trust) must be prevented from repeating such an abuse of its power and the trust that landowners mistakenly put in it."

Just last week, the Legislature in Queen's Park learned about the controversy when Halton Centre Liberal MPP, Barbara Sullivan, demanded that Environment Minister Ruth Grier and Culture Minister Rosario Marchese put an end to the logging at the farm.

Suddenly, the cutting has become an important issue and environmentalists are saying it's about time.

But the Ontario Heritage Foundation, (OHF) which sanctioned the cutting, doesn't understand what all the fuss is about.

Bob McConkey, head of marketing and communications for the OHF said the objective of the cutting in Scotsdale is to do scientific research to

demonstrate how a woodlot can be harvested to the benefit of the owner and the environment.

"We want to demonstrate, by example, that trees can still be harvested without ruining the woodlot," he said. "We were also worried that because some of these trees are so old and starting to rot, someone could be injured walking through there." The forest is located along the Bruce Trail, a scenic trail frequently travelled by nature lovers.

The project is called the 'Niagara Escarpment Woodlots Management Pilot Project' and involves the planned cuttings of woodlots throughout the Niagara Escarpment. It was initiated in late 1987 by the Niagara Escarpment Commission in co-operation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the OHF. The project report states there are two main objectives to the cutting: to determine the effects of forest management on the various vegetation communities in escarpment forests and to provide information to demonstrate the forest growth/economic potential of forest management.

Ms. Sullivan told the Legislature that wasn't a valid excuse.

"We know the effects of selective logging in woodlots - we don't need new information that comes from the destruction of property held in public trust," she said.

The fact the forest does in fact belong to the public, (the property was bequeathed to the people of Ontario in the mid-1980's when Scotsdale farm owners died), is the reason Mr. Hogg believes he

should stand up and fight against the cutting.

"They're (the OHF) treating it as a forestry project, which it isn't," he said. "It goes against the whole purpose of the Scotsdale owner's will."

The OHF said there is nothing in the will that supports the idea. "The will stated the owners wanted the property to be used as a working farm," said Mr. McConkey.

Mr. Hogg's other argument against the cuttings in Scotsdale is that the site is a haven for rare species such as the Pileated woodpecker and the Great Horned owl.

This stance was supported by the FON which said there are three habitats in the woodlot - the upland mature Maple/Beech/Ash forest, the previously logged forest and the swamplands which they consider very fragile.

"We remain unconvinced that human intellect will ever be able to improve on ecosystems so complex, we will never be able to fathom even the smallest fraction of their interactions," the FON stated in a press release.

So far, the OHF has made one sweep of cuttings in the Scotsdale woodlot.

The project report indicates many more trees will be cut since it was recommended that "harvest woodlots be sampled at one, and then at three year intervals to monitor changes in the forest communities".

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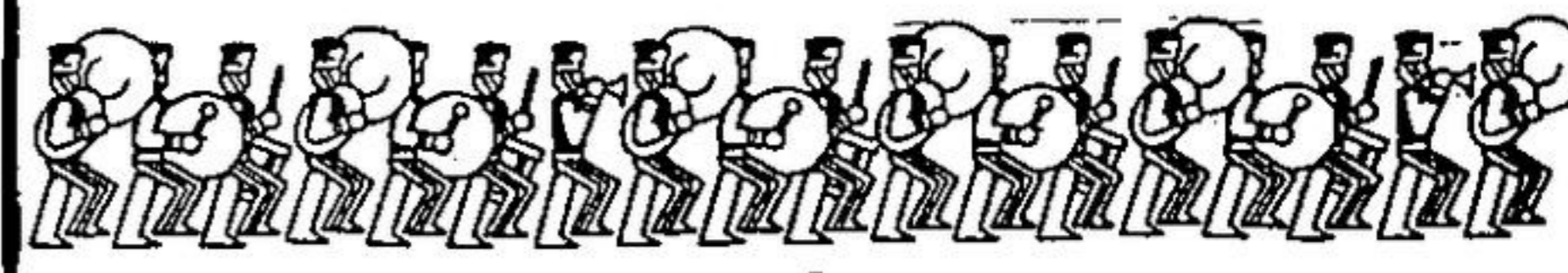
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