

Who is CONE?

The Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE) was formed in 1978 at a time when the Niagara Escarpment was being threatened by piecemeal development and there was no organized constituency fighting for its protection as a whole. CONE's mission is to support strong land use planning controls for the Niagara Escarpment and to ensure that the remaining natural areas are protected for future generations.

Over the past 22 years, CONE has emerged as a strong voice for comprehensive protection measures for the Niagara Escarpment and has acted as a collective voice for conservationists from Niagara Falls to Tobermory and across Ontario.

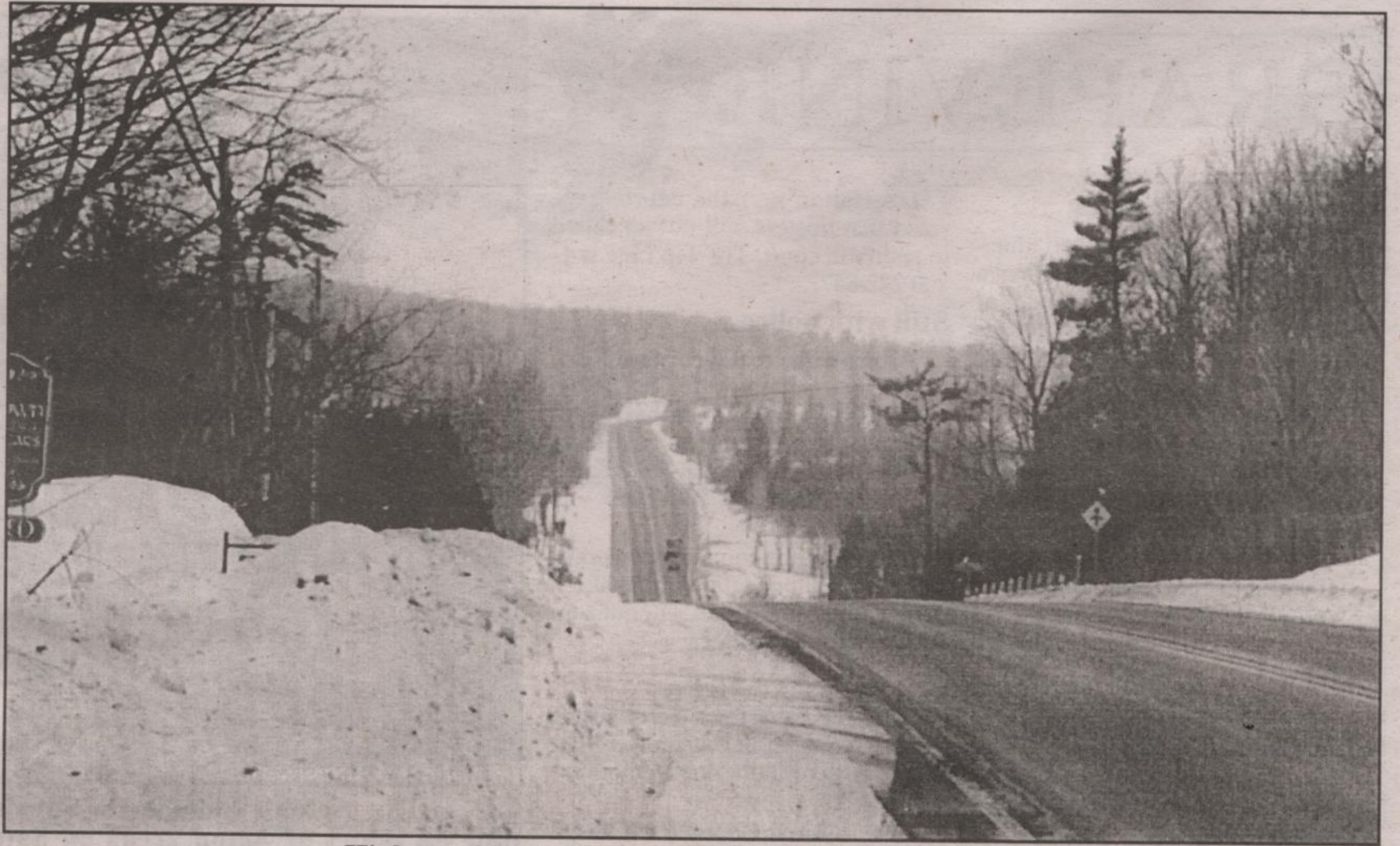
CONE's work is primarily focused on protecting the Niagara Escarpment at the provincial level through strong legislation, a strong Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the building of public support for Escarpment protection.

CONE participated in the first hearings which gave rise to the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) in 1985. CONE also acted as the voice of Ontario's conservation community in the first review of the NEP in 1990-1994. During that Review, CONE was a full

party at the public hearing and participated on various advisory committees and working groups.

Today, CONE has 25 organizations and thousands of individuals in their coalition, including:

Alpine Club of Canada (Toronto Section), Beaver Valley Heritage Society, Bruce Peninsula Environment Group, Bruce Trail Association, Caledon Ratepayers Association, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Conserver Society of Hamilton & District Earthroots, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Friends of the Escarpment (Grimsby), Friends of Red Hill Valley (Hamilton), Halton / North Peel Naturalists' Club, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Ontario Streams, Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society (PALS), Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER), Saugeen Field Naturalists, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (Storm), Senior League Endowment Society of Collingwood, Sierra Club of Canada, Eastern Canada Chapter, Toronto Caving Group, Upper Credit Field Naturalists, and Wildlands League.



Highway 25 cuts its way up the Niagara Escarpment

Province launches review of Niagara Escarpment Plan

The Ministry of Natural Resources has released the Terms of Reference for the latest Five-Year Review of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), the provincial plan which regulates development on the Niagara Escarpment.

The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act (NEPDA) requires the government to undertake Five-Year Reviews of the NEP as a way of evaluating the Plan's effectiveness in protecting the Niagara Escarpment. The last one concluded in 1994. Recent changes to the NEPDA now require reviews every 10 years, so the next review after this one is not expected to take place until 2011.

Unlike the 1994 Review which re-opened the entire NEP for discussion, the 2001 Five-Year Review has been scoped to examine five emerging issues: estate winery developments on the Niagara Peninsula, rural tourism, signage and billboards along Escarpment roads, environmental monitoring, and intensive recreational development in Escarpment parks and the status of land trusts.

"We are very pleased with the direction the government has taken so far in scoping this Review," says Jason Thorne, Manager of Coalition

on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), an environmental group representing 25 organizations along the Escarpment. "CONE has been saying all along that the NEP is a strong plan for protecting the Escarpment, so 'if it ain't broken don't fix it'. The government appears to have concurred with this viewpoint in only reviewing a few elements of the Plan which all stakeholders agree need to be re-examined."

On December 29, the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC), the provincial agency responsible for implementing the NEP, released the first three of six issue discussion papers for public comment. The final three will be

released at the end of January. The public has until March 30, 2001 to submit their comments on these documents.

A public hearing will take place over a six-week period beginning in late July. The process will conclude on November 15, 2001 when the NEC submits its recommendations for changes to the NEP to Cabinet.

"CONE will be taking a leadership role on behalf of the conservation community throughout the Five-Year Review," says Thorne. "This is an excellent opportunity for all stakeholders to address issues that have arisen over the past five years so that the Niagara Escarpment Plan will

stay up to date with today's pressures on the Escarpment, and remain as our most important tool for protecting it."

In 1990 the Niagara Escarpment was designated a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in part because of the Niagara Escarpment Plan which maintains the natural integrity of the Escarpment while accommodating the needs of a growing human population. The NEP has been studied and admired worldwide as a model for land use planning on World Biosphere Reserves.

Niagara Escarpment stretches from Queenston to Tobermory

The Niagara Escarpment stretches over 700 kms from Queenston on the Niagara Peninsula to Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula. It bisects Halton Region from Burlington to Terra Cotta and is the most prominent Halton Hills feature.

With its unique topography, the Niagara Escarpment, not surprisingly, supports a special richness of natural habitats and therefore a wide diversity of plant and animal species. In fact, because of the many different elevations and exposures to sun, wind and rain, the Escarpment is one of the most biologically diverse parts of Ontario.

The Escarpment supports 64% (1,177 species) of the

native flora species of Ontario. Over 70% of these species are considered to be locally rare. At least one plant - the Hart's tongue fern - is found nowhere else in the province.

The Escarpment has gained international ecological recognition over the past decade through the discovery by the Cliff Ecology Research Group at the University of Guelph that the small, slow-growing eastern white cedar trees clinging to Escarpment cliffs are very old - many over 1,000 years, the oldest 1,650 years. This cliff ecosystem constitutes the oldest "old growth forest" in eastern North America.

The Canadian Wildlife

Service recognizes the Escarpment as one of the six most important areas in southern Ontario for forest birds. Three hundred and twenty five species of birds, or 72% of all bird species recorded in Ontario, have been documented on the Escarpment; 198 of these species breed there.

Twenty-four of the breeding birds are considered to be provincially significant and 38 are forest-interior species requiring special habitats of large forest areas. Examples include the bald eagle, red-shouldered hawk, black tern, Louisiana waterthrush and hooded warbler.

Forty-nine mammal species, 91 native fish species, 39 native reptile and amphibian species, and 98 butterfly species can be found on the Escarpment. Almost 150 of these species are considered of provincial conservation concern (endangered, threatened, vulnerable or rare). Animal species at risk include the northern dusky salamander (endangered), the eastern massasauga rattlesnake (threatened) and the southern flying squirrel (vulnerable).

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For more information, please contact the school office.

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