

Plan workshops to inform public

Information workshops on the Niagara Escarpment Commission's Proposed Plan will be held in nine Ontario centres during the next four weeks.

Commission Chairman Ivor McMullin said the workshops will afford an opportunity for Commission members and planners to meet with the public on a one-to-one basis, to explain the Plan and to answer questions on the Proposed Plan released Nov. 22.

"Additional information workshops will be held as required in the New Year," Mr. McMullin said.

All other workshops will be two-day sessions, from noon until 8 p.m. in the following locations:

- Caledon, Dec. 10-11, Caledon Village Place (Lower Level).
- Ancaster, Dec. 12-13, Ancaster Municipal Office, Council Chamber.
- Owen Sound, Dec. 13-14, Owen Sound Public Library (Boardroom).
- Honeywood, Dec. 17-18, Honeywood Arena.
- Milton, Dec. 18 and 20, Milton Public Library.

Copies of the Proposed Plan are available at the Commission's offices in Georgetown, Grimsby and Clarksburg, and also may be examined at municipal offices and libraries throughout the Escarpment area and at the municipal Reference Library at Toronto City Hall and the Metro Toronto Library, 789 Yonge St.

For the convenience of the public, extended office hours will be in effect at all three Commission offices, to Dec. 6—8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.—and thereafter regular office hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) will be resumed.

NEC unveils escarpment plan

The Niagara Escarpment Commission has unveiled its Proposed Niagara Escarpment Plan from Queenston on the Niagara River to Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula.

The 84-page plan and accompanying maps contain environmentally-oriented land-use policies and designations for a 1,923 square-kilometre (742 square-mile) area that extends through 46 municipalities.

Commission Chairman Ivor McMullin said the plan is the result of concerted efforts by the Commission to draft a "plain English" document that meets the objectives of The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act.

"In addition," Mr. McMullin said, "The Commission is strongly recommending develop-

ment of an extensive system of Escarpment parks, emphasis on compatible development of the recreation and tourism potential of the Escarpment and provision for municipal administration of parts of the plan."

Highlights of the plan include the Commission's recommendations and proposals for:

- designating three major land use designations—Escarpment Natural Areas, Escarpment Protection Areas, and Escarpment Rural Areas—with accompanying policies to apply to 92 per cent of the area of the Proposed Plan; and four supplementary designations applying to the remaining eight per cent of the area;
- creation of Niagara Escarpment Parks System, comprising 116 parks, of which 70 per cent of the land is currently in public ownership;
- purchase by the province of 11,558 hectares (28,670 acres) from willing landowners for completion of the proposed Niagara Escarpment Parks System;
- adoption of development control as the "preferred method" of implementing the plan's environmentally-oriented land-use policies;
- stabilization of the Bruce Trail by the government negotiating with willing landowners to purchase strips of land "such as on the borders of properties" or by trail easements;
- and provisions for government purchase of existing vacant lots upon the request of owners who might be denied permission to develop lots which otherwise would meet municipal and health standards.

The Commission further recommended a series of amendments to The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act which would:

- add cities within regional municipalities to the list of bodies—regions, counties, cities and the Commission—which may be delegated to issue development permits in the Escarpment area;
- appoint the Ontario Municipal Board to deal with appeals on development permits;
- and allow appeals by anyone requesting notification of a development decision.

In its recommendation for creation of a parks system, the Commission urges the provincial government to launch a five-year acquisition program to purchase 11,558 hectares (28,670 acres). When added to parklands currently owned by the public, the Niagara Escarpment Parks proposals would complete a system of 116 parks totalling 28,778 hectares (95,844 acres).

The environmentally-oriented land use designations in the plan are: Escarpment Natural Areas, Escarpment Protection Areas, Escarpment Rural Areas, Minor Urban Centres, Urban Centres, Escarpment Recreation Areas and Mineral Resources Areas.

The plan covers 37 per cent of the 5,200 square-kilometre (2,000 square-mile) area originally assigned to the Commission by the Ontario Government in 1974.

The most sensitive and least disturbed areas of the Escarpment are included under the Es-

carpment Natural Areas designation which covers 29 per cent of the area of the Proposed Plan.

In the Natural Areas, permitted uses include agriculture, trail-type recreation, forest and wildlife management, archaeology, and compatible single family dwellings on existing vacant lots which are not to be purchased for public use.

The Escarpment Protection Areas, designating 35 per cent of the total plan area, includes Escarpment slopes and associated lands which are more developed than in the Natural Area, but in which the Commission's policy is to maintain the remaining natural features and open rural landscape.

In the Protection Areas, one new lot may be severed for permitted uses—residential, agriculture, forestry and recreation, per 40 hectares (100 acres) or per original township lot.

The recreational uses recommended in the Protection Areas include "golf courses, picnic sites and day-use sites and trail uses oriented towards land rather than requiring the building of major structures."

The Commission lists "growth objectives" for the urban centres designed to direct growth away from Escarpment Natural and Protection Areas and lessen any potential urban growth impact on the Escarpment.

When the Niagara Escarpment Plan is adopted by the Cabinet, the approved growth objectives will be incorporated into local official plans and by-laws.

The Escarpment Recreation Areas designation identifies primary recreational areas along the Escarpment and includes downhill ski areas, lakeshore cottage areas and marinas.

Permitted uses would include the expansion of recreational uses.

New residential lots are also permitted for recreation, preferably on lots or blocks created by registered plans for subdivisions, condominium or other compatible forms of lot ownership.

Development Act should be amended to provide for appeals on development permits to be heard by the Ontario Municipal Board. Currently appeals are made through hearing officers appointed by the Minister of Housing.

The Commission points out that "public awareness of the Ontario Municipal Board as a court of appeal on planning decisions is a strong argument in favor of its use in the development control process."

Since 1975, when the government delegated to the Commission the administration of interim development control, the Commission has dealt with approximately 4,000 development permits.

"Over 90 per cent of these," the Commission reports, "have been approved subject to conditions."

Applications which were refused were primarily those that did not meet normal municipal or health standards for development or where the building lot had yet been created.

(Other refusals included development proposals for lots situated on the Escarpment brow, undersized lots, lots located on flood or hazard lands, and lots not fronting on a public road.)

The interim development control area consists of 2,550 square kilometres (957 square miles) flanking the 725 kilometre (450 mile)-long Escarpment corridor.

The Commission is currently consulting with municipalities about returning to the control of municipalities any lands which are under interim development control but are now located outside the proposed plan area.

management within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area.

The recommendation is contained in the Commission's Proposed Plan for the Niagara Escarpment.

Commission Chairman Ivor McMullin said the recommendation is the result of the Commission's experience in administering interim development control in the more environmentally sensitive areas of the Escarpment since 1975.

"We concluded," Mr. McMullin said, "that the development control system, as opposed to zoning, is well suited to protecting sensitive areas because each development can be judged individually on how it fits into the environment."

Under the current provisions of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, development control authority may be delegated to a county, regional municipality, a city outside a regional municipality or to the Commission.

The Commission is recommending that the Act be amended to allow the development control authority also to be delegated to cities such as Hamilton within regional municipalities.

The Commission further recommends that:

- Municipalities should have the option of using either development control or zoning within three designated areas covered by the plan—Urban Centres, Minor Urban Centres and Escarpment Recreation Areas.
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management within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area.

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In sensitive areas

No new quarries

The Niagara Escarpment Commission is urging the provincial government to prohibit any new pits or quarries in the Escarpment's most environmentally sensitive areas along the 725 kilometre (450 mile) Escarpment corridor from Queenston to Tobermory.

The recommendation is contained in the Commission's Proposed Plan, released last week.

If adopted, the Commission's recommendation would exclude all new pits and quarries in the 12,372 square kilometres (477 square miles) designated as Escarpment Natural Areas and Escarpment Protection Areas in the Proposed Plan and representing 64 per cent of the plan area.

The Commission also suggests that existing licensed pits and quarries continue their operations until their licences expire.

If, under the proposed new Aggregates Act, existing licences come up for renewal, the Commission recommends that, if necessary, adjustment be made in the site plans to reduce the environmental impacts of the extraction operations.

The Commission recommends that new aggregate extraction be directed to the Escarpment Rural Areas of the Proposed Plan. Wayside pits would be permitted in both Escarpment Rural Areas and Escarpment Protection Areas.

"Based on the data provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Commission has ascertained that there

is available within the Escarpment Rural Areas, and in areas currently licensed for mineral extraction, an estimated 22.7 billion tonnes (25 billion tons) of high priority effective reserves of mineral aggregate. This would more than meet the projected demands to year 2001," the Proposed Plan states.

"The industrial mineral resources of the Escarpment include dolostone, limestone, sand and gravel, sandstone, shale and clays.

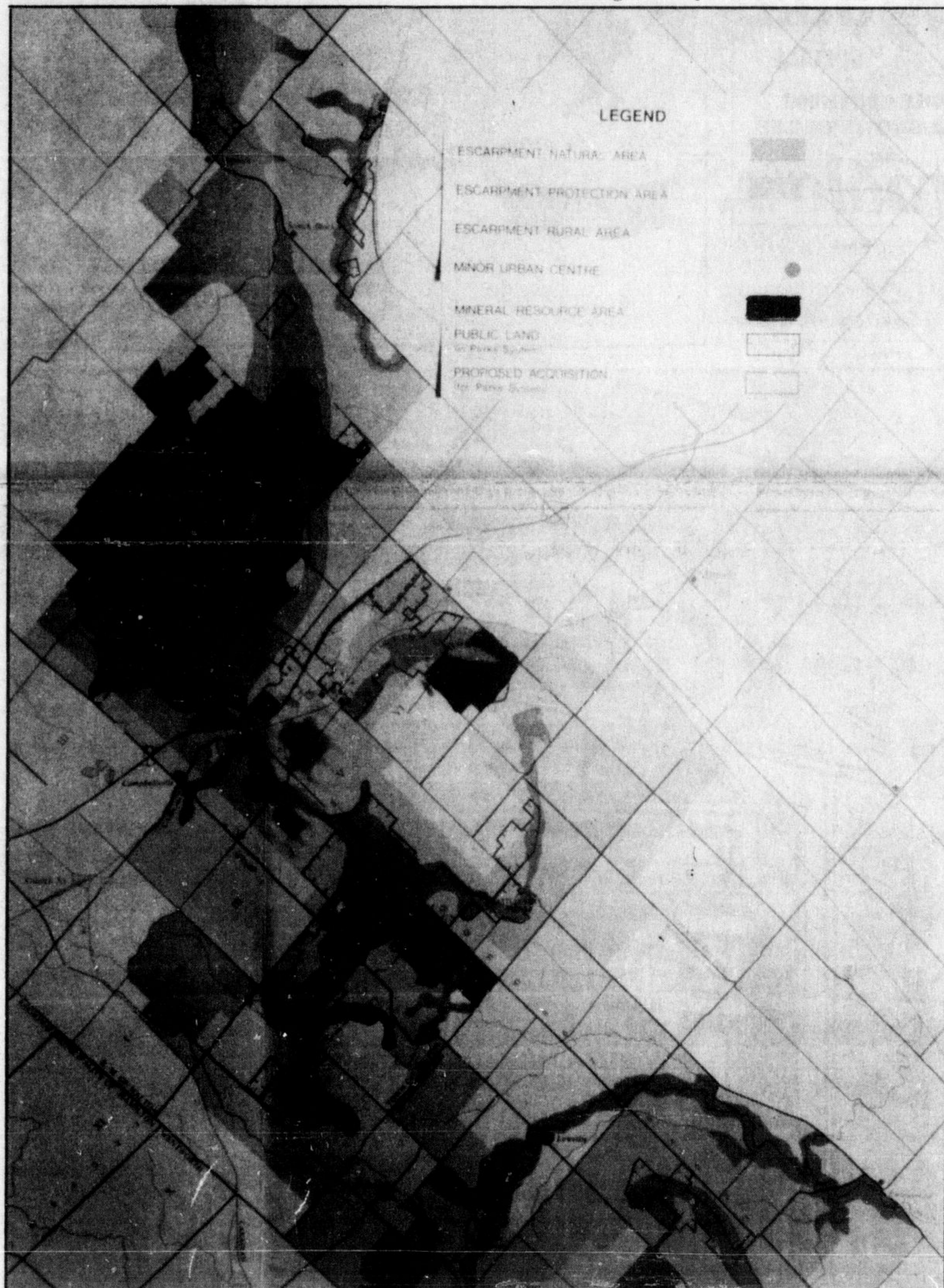
The Commission warned, however, "the Escarpment should not be looked upon for all time as a primary source of aggregate."

It recommends that the Ministry of Natural Resources should develop alternative aggregate resources "by either undertaking feasibility studies or providing incentives to private industry" to study the possibilities of dredging for sand and gravel in Lake Ontario, underground mining of limestone and mining the Canadian Shield.

The Commission further recommends that no new licences be granted for aggregate extraction within 200 metres (600 feet) of the edge of the Escarpment.

Other recommendations related to mineral extraction include:

- progressive rehabilitation of pits and quarries as extraction proceeds; and
- after-use of excavated areas to be compatible with the surrounding land uses and objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Plan.



THE NEW MASTER PLAN for the Niagara Escarpment Commission includes maps showing areas designated for natural, protection and rural uses.

Along Escarpment

Parks system proposed for 116 existing, new parks

The Niagara Escarpment Commission in its Proposed Plan to maintain the Escarpment, is recommending the creation of a 116-parks Niagara Escarpment Parks System.

The proposed 95,844 acre system would be made up of 67,174 acres currently in public ownership in addition to 28,670 acres which the Commission recommends should be purchased by the province.

The Commission recommends that the province allocate funds over a five year period to complete the acquisition of the parklands and that Wintario be used in part to assist in the funding of the program.

The Commission also recommends that the

acquisition program include additions to the Bruce Trail as landowners indicate a willingness to negotiate trail easements or to sell strips of land for the Trail.

The Commission's Proposed Plan describes the Bruce Trail as "an essential component" of the proposed Parks System.

The Commission urges the province to negotiate agreements in which the Bruce Trail Association would manage the Trail in a professional manner.

The agreement, the Commission says, should include provision for litter clean-ups, trail wardens, landowner relations, public information and trail development.

In the Park System,

the Commission says, the Bruce Trail would link parks and natural features on the Escarpment.

Currently, 45 per cent of the Bruce Trail—320 kilometres (200 miles)—is on public roads, and the Trail is no longer continuous as it was once before some landowners refused the Trail passage through their properties.

"The challenge" says Commission Chairman Ivor McMullin, "is to achieve a gradual reconstruction of the Trail in a suitable location."

The parks in the proposed system would be divided into three classifications:

- Nature Reserve Parks to be preserved in as close to a wilderness state as possible;
- Natural Environ-

ment Recreation Parks for moderate intensity recreation including camping, trails, hiking, scientific and educational uses;

- and Intensive Recreation Parks offering a full range of recreation activities from camping to downhill skiing.

The proposed Escarpment Parks System would form a sub-system of the provincial parks system with individual parks to be managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources or by conservation authorities.

Sixteen areas along the Escarpment corridor have been recommended to complete the parks acquisition on a three-phase priority basis as funds become available.



THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT is a jewel in our midst. Niagara Escarpment Commission seeks to preserve it and utilize it to its fullest advantages. The newly-released Master Plan designates areas of the Escarpment for public recreational use, like Rattlesnake Point in Milton.