

# 20th anniversary of NE Plan celebrated

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

*The Champion*

Local residents and dignitaries celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Niagara Escarpment Plan Thursday.

The milestone of Canada's first large-scale environmental plan was marked at Country Heritage Park, with several provincial politicians taking the stage to extend their congratulations.

The plan that's designed to strike a balance between development, preservation and things like recreation and tourism was adopted by the Ontario legislature June 12, 1985.

Norm Sterling, a former secretary for resource development and current Lanark-Carleton MPP, recalled for the large crowd the trials and tribulations of getting the plan put together and approved.

He said the plan was first unveiled in Burlington in 1984, but was sent back to the drawing board because it would've "emasculated" the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Just shortly before the government changed from Conservative to Liberal in 1985, Mr. Sterling said he pushed to get the plan through for fear that it would fall by the wayside.

"I think it was one of our (the Conservatives) greatest environmental achievements," he said, calling it the crowning and best last effort of his party.

He summed up by saying, "God bless the escarpment. Let's keep it as pristine as we can as we go forward."

Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsay also attended the event and remi-

nised about his younger days when he used to ride his bike to Rattlesnake Point on the Niagara Escarpment.

He said he could only imagine what would've happened to the escarpment if those first steps to implement the plan hadn't been taken.

"The concept of protecting the escarpment throughout this great province of ours is shared by all three political parties," he emphasized, adding it's also an idea that the people of Ontario share.

He noted that the Niagara Escarpment Plan is a cornerstone of the Province's new greenbelt strategy.

Niagara Escarpment Commission chair Don Scott told *The Champion* after the ceremony that he sees the plan as being not only environmentally beneficial, but also economically. "It (the plan) created a lot of controversy in the beginning, but people are starting to realize the environment is the economy," he said. "Tourism generates a lot of money."

He noted in the future, the plan will "probably have more green in it," like larger natural areas.

He emphasized that on the escarpment, "Farmers need the land and vintners need the land. You can put the subdivisions somewhere else."

The escarpment spans 725 kilometres and encompasses everything from limestone cliffs and forests to farmland and parks. For more information on the plan visit [www.escarpment.org](http://www.escarpment.org).

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