

MAPLE AMUSEMENT PARK

Defending the Park

Opposing the Park

Amusement park would push development pressure north

The theme park proposed in Vaughan would have a "leap-frogging effect" pushing development pressure northward, the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) was told last week.

Summing up three weeks of evidence as the OMB hearing concluded at Maple Thursday, ratepayers' lawyer John Richardson asked the board to withhold ap-

proval of the town's theme park legislation. Solicitor Richardson said urban development further south is proceeding north in an orderly fashion.

Evidence of the ratepayers' expert witness showed the proposed use wouldn't be appropriate and the plan shouldn't be recommended for approval, he said.

Traffic noise now absent on weekends in Maple would be extended to seven days a week under the plan.

The Maple community accepted the notion of growth to 7,500 people, but not the kind of growth the park would mean.

The Toronto-Centred Region plan zone boundaries were never intended to be sharp edges. The park property at west side of Highway 400 at Major Mackenzie Drive was near the boundary of (urban) zone one, he argued.

Richardson said the park plan was unique. Canadian planners had no precedent upon which to draw.

Onto Highway 400 due to congestion or accidents, regional roads would be used.

Nobody had done a particular study of Highway 400 spill on regional roads, said Richardson.

Even though evidence showed projected traffic on Maple area roads would not exceed the acceptable level in terms of capacity, there was more to it than that.

There would be increased interference with local traffic. There would also be an annoyance factor, interference with weekend peace and quiet.

Farm vehicle traffic would also be interfered with.

Richardson argued the projected economic benefits weren't as certain as they might be.

Taking into account recent fluctuations in the Canadian dollar and effects on tourism, there was some question as to whether the park would mean a significant influx of U.S. dollars. And 18 per cent of park attendance was expected to be from the U.S.

"The public good as presented isn't certain don't forget the private good sought by the developer," said the lawyer for Maple Ratepayers Inc. and

Sensible Approach to Vaughan Environment (S.A.V.E.).

From an energy conservation standpoint the park could better be located on a GO transit line. There were significant gaps in the studies done, he said.

Under the province's Strategy for Preservation of Ontario Food Lands, recreation uses were to be put on poor land rather than on prime farm land like that around Maple.

NO INFORMATION

The impact would be on more than the site's 300 farm acres, but rather would be on some 1,200 acres including adjacent prime farm land.

"It seems desirable to have some more certain basis than the comparison with experience in Cincinnati, Ohio where we have no information as to competing attractions and disposable income," said the citizens' solicitor.

He said there were uncertainties as to exactly what the economic performance of the project will be while the town and region assume the park will pay for services built.

Canadian experience might be different from that in the U.S., Richardson said.

Public interest outweighs harm to Maple residents

"The public interest far outweighs any private harm caused to residents of Maple."

That's how lawyer J.F. McCallum Thursday ended the argument at the OMB hearing for developer Family Leisure Centre's proposed theme park.

"Apart from this application, the residents are certain to lose their non-city atmosphere."

"Despite recorded and well-heard objections, all three levels of government (town, region, province) charged with acting in the public interest, have come down in favor of the project."

"They found the public interest outweighs the private harm," said McCallum.

Hearing evidence showed theme parks to be the fastest growing industry in the U.S. and Ontario's need to compete transcended any Maple private interest. All of Vaughan, of region and of province would benefit, he said.

Not a single provincial ministry recommended against approval. All were satisfied the park proceed, after certain recommended modifications were made.

"They (the objectors) have failed to show this project by itself will so harm the public interest that the proposal for having the park must be denied," said McCallum.

MAPLE FABRIC

"What we have seen is a demonstration of the private interests of certain residents of Maple."

"All referred to quality of life: traffic, noise pollution, non-city living."

"The fabric of Maple life is made up of the airport, truck traffic, Highway 400 traffic, CN yards and the march north of the total (Metro) industrial complex."

"They've got to cope with growth and with industry. It's coming."

"Every one of those factors is growing and changing. There'll be even faster growth and change from the pits."

"Their quality of life is a situation of change," said the theme park firm's lawyer.

He said it was proven the land isn't good for farming in the light of all the circumstances.

Capacity is provided inside the park for all the feared spin-off from the development. Spin-off to the surrounding area just wouldn't happen because

it was contained within the site.

McCallum said all the objectors showed was that Maple residents might have trouble getting home and Maple may become a less attractive place to live.

"That doesn't add up to such a presentation of harm to these residents that you should feel compelled to deny this application," he said.

DON'T LIKE IT

McCallum's associate John Chipman summarized the evidence on traffic impact, land use planning and need.

"There is no evidence refuting the planning desirability of the park. The people only expressed concern, saying they didn't like it."

"The peak flow seen for park traffic on Major Mackenzie Drive is no greater than that counted on Wednesday morning in 1975."

"The future bypass may allow theme park traffic to go around Maple altogether."

The Maple ratepayers' main concern is trucks going to the gravel pit areas. That is a very separate matter from the movement of private automobiles to

the theme park.

"The project land is in the Toronto-Centred Region plan's zone one. Therefore the project is an appropriate urban use requiring urban services."

He said the hearing showed tourism to be Ontario's second or third largest industry, depending on the means of measurement used.

The province had a huge tourism deficit. The theme park would fill a vacuum in the range of facilities in the Metro area.

It would help, rather than hurt, other facilities.

NEW ATTENDANCE

Evidence showed Canadian National Exhibition attendance rose 500,000 while other new attractions (Metro Zoo, CN Tower, Ontario Place, Blue Jays) attracted 6,000,000 in new attendance.

The park would contribute 2,000 student jobs toward Ontario's target of 10,000, said Chipman.

Of the 200 permanent jobs, 90 per cent would go to Canadians at first. Virtually all the jobs would eventually go to Canadians, the developer's associate lawyer said.

Appropriate development for Vaughan

"This is a very appropriate development for Vaughan."

That's how Vaughan Town Solicitor Tom Fraser summed up the Maple area theme park situation at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing Wednesday afternoon.

"The citizens will benefit from taxes and employment, traffic improvements, tourist industry expansion and an inflow of U.S. dollars."

"The project will round out and complement other attractions around Maple. It will be a useful additional resource."

Town Solicitor Fraser said an expert planner testified the proposed use was very suitable for the site.

The theme park would reduce local water rates. The developer would pay for all the traffic improvements except for a length of Rutherford Road the town would be improving anyway.

Hydro service would be improved.

Even now the whole property could be used for an institution or for

recreation. Evidence showed there was doubt as to the agricultural value of the land without extensive and expensive drainage work, Fraser said.

He argued there are sufficient controls to prevent spin-off development in the vicinity.

NO RESTRICTION

Fraser said there is nothing in region or town policy that restricts prime farm land to agricultural uses.

The decision on this belonged to the province, and the province had no applicable policy.

Nearly 1,200 similar acres were just recently zoned for industry. Most of the land for some distance northward is owned by non-farmer companies leasing to farmers.

"Until the province develops a policy allowing the farmer on such expensive land some allowance enabling him to continue farming, there will be no provincial policy against such changes in land use," he said.

TESTING GROUND

Maple was being proposed as a testing ground for theories that relate to theme parks, particularly as to traffic and economic impact.

The project was clearly a use of some size, since 85 to 90 acres of parking are included.

The average daily attendance of 18,000 people would be twice what the final Maple population will grow to in 20 years. Saturday attendance would be four times that. Maple population.

In addition, there would be more than 2,000 employees.

The 17,500 Saturday vehicle movements meant a car entering the park every two seconds.

If a proposed bypass around Maple isn't built, park traffic would simply be added to today's truck traffic.

There would be pressure for widening of Highway 400 and for alternative use or spill-off onto local roads.

Since no widening of 400 was planned, traffic would likely exit 400 onto local roads.

If theme park traffic had trouble returning

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