

Land ripe for conservation use

By BRUCE STAPLEY
The vacant land north of Millard Street has potential that is just waiting to be tapped. So says Stouffville's Denis Sainsbury. The Ninth Line North resident has for years been a member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Conservation Club. The club was originally given a mandate by the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to help determine what use should be made of the area rich with trees, streams and wildlife.

To rekindle that flagging interest, he recently put together a video highlighting the 105-acre parcel of land and its potential as a conservation area. It was shown to town council in the presence of conservation authority officials. "It's in the hands of the conservation authority officials now," Mr. Sainsbury says. The authority owns the land, and has been responsible for the development of such facilities as Bruce's Mill. In his video, Mr. Sainsbury

noted both the passive recreational potential of the area, as well as the potential for an active recreational facility. "I'd like to see the face of the area cleaned up, the part that fronts on Millard Street," he explains. "There could be skating, swings, change houses and parking for those using the area. But to the north, it would be left as is, except for a nature trail the authority has proposed." Mr. Sainsbury says the area is the home of many different forms

of wildlife, including rare species of birds like the egret. He feels whatever the conservation authority comes up with, it will probably depend on some local funding, and he'd like to see the local conservation club revitalized. "I'd like to get input from the townspeople as to what they'd like to see done," he says. "At the moment, the people don't know where to go with their ideas." He maintains that the area,

while a well-kept secret to some, is greatly appreciated by those who walk it regularly. He insists there is no danger of the area ever being considered for residential development, because it is designated as a flood plain. The land is low, and the water level of the pond is controlled as part of the flood control aspect of the facility. Mr. Sainsbury would like to see the dam restructured so the pond would remain at a regular level year-round, to accommodate skaters in the winter.

In the past, the area was stocked with pheasants, and licenses were sold to people who would come in and hunt them. Mr. Sainsbury doesn't want to see a return to this practice, but he hopes other fund-raising methods could be employed to raise the money required to turn the land into a proper conservation area. He realizes the area is different things to different people, and hopes that an overall plan for the land would accommodate as many of the different interests as possible. "It's got to be done in a way where we are not saying, hey, this is how it must be done. I don't want to see any rigid rules. Let's just get something done. It's very unique," he insists. "We should be making more use of it."

Mr. Sainsbury says he's willing to help out with whatever plan is devised. "I only hope there are many others out there who would be interested in getting involved, too."

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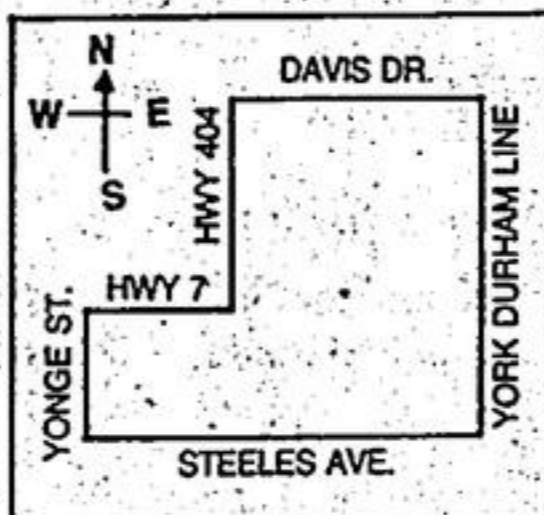


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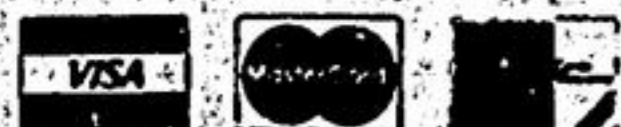
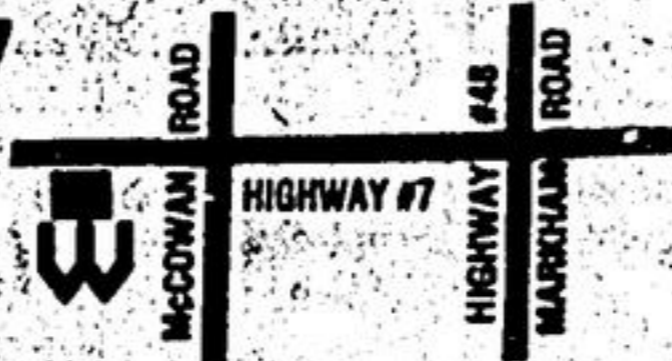
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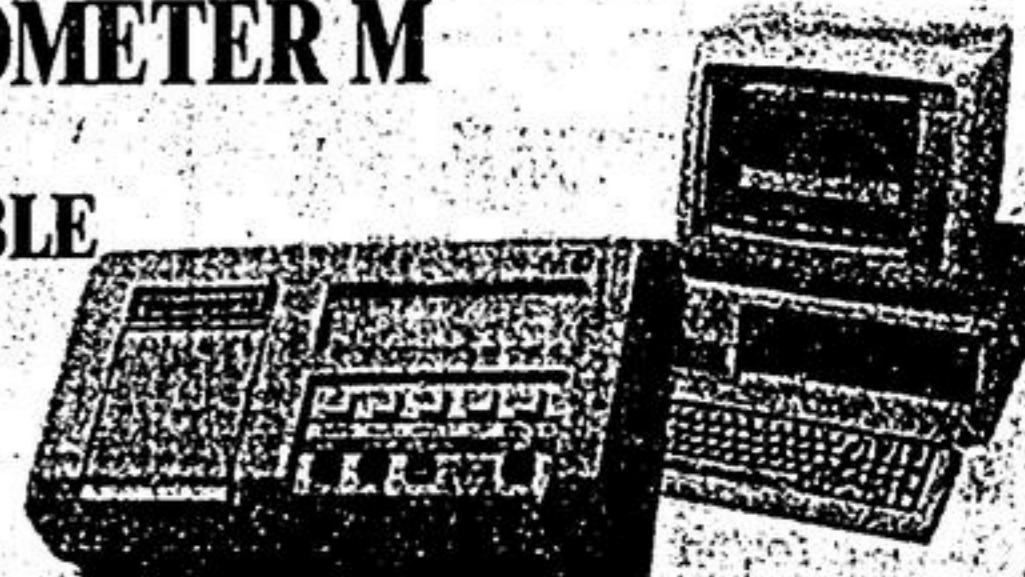
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