

# Durham, Markham differ over use of preserve

MIKE ADLER  
Staff Reporter

It's a house builder's dream: 8,000 rustic acres close to Metro Toronto. Minutes, in just a few years from now, from downtown by car.

Unless local governments can resist pressure to develop it, the former Duffin Rouge Agricultural Preserve in Markham and north Pickering, could house enough suburban commuters to people a new city.

Confident that won't happen for 20 years, the Town of Markham is simply keeping the agricultural designations in its official plan on preserve lands within its boundary.

But Durham Region, which con-

tains most of the land Ontario expropriated in 1972, has ordered a different approach: conservation easements on all parcels the province wants to sell.

The July 2 Durham Regional Council decision was an unprecedented step in Canada, according to the Green Door Alliance, an environmental group which has argued for such easements for years, and also wants them placed on federal lands spread south of Stouffville and Uxbridge.

"As far as we're aware it's the first time in Canada," Alliance president Dr. Paul Thompson said of the regional council decision this month.

The group has called the land "among the most valuable in Cana-

da" because it contains large concentrations of the highest grade of foodland.

An easement is a private agreement, that, unlike a municipal zoning for land use, cannot be challenged by a developer at the Ontario Municipal Board, Thompson said recently. "When we look at OMB decisions, we don't have much confidence in zoning" to protect agricultural land, he added.

The preserve is a patchwork of land leased by farmers and other rural tenants. An extension of the 407 expressway is planned through it to Brock Rd. in Pickering, perhaps making fast travel from the area to Toronto possible within a few years.

Already, there are rumors of land

speculation on either side of the York-Durham boundary. "There were people (preserve tenants) who were approached by people who wanted to buy it for speculative purposes," Thompson said.

A York Regional councillor from Markham, however, predicts the Markham section of the preserve won't lose its agricultural character to development for perhaps 30 years.

"Everything's been protected, I think, very adequately," said Gord Landon.

"We have not added any new uses or created any new parcels," and valley lands, woodlots and other environmentally sensitive places are already protected by easements, Landon said.

Thompson's group still thinks futher protection is necessary, Landon acknowledged. "We haven't shut the door on that."

Markham also granted the provincial landlord, the Ontario Realty Corporation, the use of Crown right over its part of the preserve. This means the ORC

doesn't need to get the town's permission for each severance.

Durham politicians, however, felt that even a government agency shouldn't get special treatment for its severance requests, according to Uxbridge Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, chair of the region's planning committee. "We want them to go through the same process as anybody else," she said last week.

What easements on the Durham side will actually restrict "hasn't been completely worked out yet," said Jim Blair, operations manager for Durham's planning department.

"The overall objective to doing it is to ensure there's an additional hurdle, other than the Planning Act, if someone wants to develop the area," Blair said yesterday.

Easements can be "in perpetuity" or they can be for a fixed period, like 20 years, he noted.

"I think what was on council's mind was that they be forever. They basically come with the land."

## Weston store delivers free to seniors

JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Reporter

A local grocery store has introduced a free make-up and delivery service for seniors and the handicapped.

Vince Bisogno, manager of Weston Produce Food Centre, says a need for a grocery delivery service for Stouffville's seniors was recognized.

"We decided to respond to the need to help our seniors and the affirmed," he said.

Bisogno pointed out that in the summer, there are "hot and muggy days" making it difficult for seniors to do their food shopping. Of course, in the winter, stormy or very cold weather keeps mature residents from getting out. Yet, the need to eat never stops.

The new program is simple: Weston's delivery service is provided twice a day, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A senior calls the store and gives the grocery order over the telephone. The order is made up and within about an hour, the groceries will be delivered free of charge to the caller's home. An



THEY DELIVER: Weston Produce delivers groceries free of charge to seniors. Maria Marchese, left, delivers Mary Lintner's groceries.

Photo by LORI EMMERSON

order must be a minimum of \$15.

"We're a family business," stressed Bisogno.

"This is an excellent town. While most stores our size don't do this, we decided to

offer it. I hope it's used," said Bisogno. Weston Produce is located at 5710 Main Street in the Stouffville Place Mall.

To make arrangements for the free delivery service call 640-9345.

## York Region police launch new boat

York Regional Police launched their newest boat last Friday.

"The Shearer," named after former police commissioner Judge Bill Shearer, was launched from its new home at Dawson's Marine in Keswick.

The 22-foot Stanley Machine aluminum boat replaces the 10-year-old, 16-foot Starcraft. The old boat will be sold at the next police auction. The new boat will be used in search and res-

cue operations as well as law enforcement.

"We do radar — speed enforcement on certain rivers," explained Staff Sergeant Brian McDonald, of the marine unit. "(There's) the RIDE program on the lake (Simcoe) and equipment inspections."

The 200-horsepower boat is equipped with first aid equipment, both VHF marine and police radios and a

high-tech instrument called a Ground Positioning System (GPS).

"That's the instrument designed by the American army where they can locate something anywhere around the world by satellite," explained McDonald.

"Most boaters have it now; you can set your GPS to say a harbor and through this mapping system you can navigate through fog and at night."

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