

ENVIRONMENT: Town frustrated by lack of provincial support for saving natural feature

Saving moraine needs provincial help

BY MIKE ADLER
STAFF WRITER

The town that still boasts of being "Canada's fastest growing municipality" is looking at a way to stop its part of the Oak Ridges Moraine from disappearing.

But for its plan to save natural "corridors" between important features of the moraine to work, Richmond Hill councillors made clear this week, the town will need provincial money and co-operation from private landowners.

"The town does not have the financial resources to buy those lands," planning commissioner

Janet Babcock said after council decided to make the corridor study public and re-examine it in February.

The town will also ask the province to clarify its vague support for moraine preservation. Babcock said she was frustrated with the study committee's provincial representative, who said the town should preserve a significant moraine corridor — but how that's done is up to the town.

"I've had it," Babcock said. Since 1994, the province has done nothing with the Oak Ridges Moraine Strategy for the Greater

Toronto Area, which offered directions on how the moraine could and should be protected, and yet still gave ample opportunities for development, according to Ron Christie, who chaired the technical working committee that spent years preparing it.

"It was a damn good bit of work," said Christie, current chair of the Rouge Park Alliance. "The government of the day has obviously decided not to pursue it."

For moraine protection to happen, there has to be a provincial initiative to spell out what will be done, he said. "If that doesn't hap-

pen, nothing much is going to happen."

Richmond Hill's proposal has already alarmed some local landowners, including Barb Murgatroyd, a resident in the study area for 35 years. "All of a sudden I'm environmentally sensitive," she told council. "I'm terrified."

Moraine resident and developer John Emery later complained about "governments' arbitrary and high-handed attitude" in dealing with private property.

Most councillors spoke of "give and take" with owners and the town's ability to compromise on

proposed corridors.

But Councillor Joe Di Paola said the whole plan is a "dream-like scenario" unless landowners volunteer for it.

"Somebody's got to support the interests of people over animals," he said.

Ministry of Natural Resources spokesperson Brian Blomme said he won't comment on the study until the province is approached by the town.

The 1994 moraine strategy, he said, was put aside while the province reviewed municipal planning

Citizens band together

Grassroots movement grows stronger

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
STAFF WRITER

A town-wide ratepayers group, spearheaded by resident Jim Pribe, is now in place.

Armed with the belief that strength in numbers delivers the strongest voice, the group held its inaugural meeting Tuesday.

Group members plan to help each other to deal with planning matters in each ward, such as environmental issues.

"We formed a coalition of ratepayers and residents' associations to address issues of mutual concern and quality of life," co-organizer Mike Watson said.

The group is made up of Pride and Preston Lake, Whitchurch-Stouffville Citizens' Association, Vandorf Residential Association, North Whitchurch-Stouffville Ratepayers Association, and Friends of Musselman's Lake.

"Those attending discussed how they could help each other and their residents, what they have in common, and where to proceed," Watson said.

The coalition will detail goals, its mandate, and a complete mission statement in the near year.

In the meantime, those attending were given the task of taking the umbrella groups' concept back to their perspective associations.

"The idea now is to come back with a set of goals and a direction to work from," Watson said.

TAKING STALK



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Lauren Wallis and Jessica Reesor hold up Brenda, the straw-stuffed scarecrow which guards the entrance of the corn maze, located at the Reesor farm on 9th Line. Admission is \$1 and goes to Canadian Foodgrains Bank, as does the corn which will be harvested after Halloween.

Airport protests buy residents time

BY MIKE ADLER
STAFF WRITER

Protests are, at the very least, buying more time for residents opposing the plan to designate federal lands in Pickering, Markham and Uxbridge as an airport site.

This week, Federal Transport Minister David Collette extended the comment period on the measure for a second 60-day period, this time to Dec. 31.

Originally, residents were given until Aug. 30 to comment when Collette announced the plan in July.

Organizers of VOCAL (Voters Organized to Cancel the Airport Lands) said the decision helps the group's campaign to sway Durham and York Region politicians against a future airport at Pickering.

"Now we have much more time

and considerably more forces," VOCAL president Steven Frederick said.

Peter Gregg, a spokesperson for Collette, said the government, noting local interest on the issue, is allowing 60 more days so that it does not leave people angry that they didn't get a chance to speak.

Transport Canada will examine all public comments to see if it should be re-examining what we are doing," he promised.

"I'd be surprised if people view it as a retreat," Gregg said of the extension. "We've been very clear on what we intend to do."

The government says it only plans to protect its 18,600-acre holding for airport use in the distant future. The Claremont-based VOCAL, however, believes an airport could open within a decade if the designation goes ahead.

Ballantrae 'popular' pot area

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pellets in the head.

But when police arrived at the hospital neither could say who had fired the shots.

Henschel told the jury when York Region Police searched Bolender's property about six hours later, they found six guns and several rounds of ammunition.

Henschel said forensic experts will testify that Bolender's fingerprint and a partial palm print were discovered on a 12-gauge shotgun that was most likely used to fire shots at the fleeing car.

Sgt. Mark Brown testified Thursday that Bolender told him twice he did not have any firearms

on the property just before police executed a search warrant.

Brown said Bolender denied having marijuana on the vast, wooded property, saying the RCMP had seized plants a "couple of years ago."

Defence lawyer Ken Murray contended it was well-known that the Ballantrae area was a popular place for growers to plant marijuana unbeknownst to property owners. "This was virgin territory. There were often large crops found back there," Murray suggested.

The jury heard a police helicopter had been searching for marijuana plantations in the area in the days leading up to the shooting.

The trial continues.

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