

# Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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## EDITORIAL

### Province must support efforts to save moraine

Its 160 kilometres long, extends across Durham, York and Peel regions, is the headwaters for more than 35 rivers and streams in the Greater Toronto Area — and the provincial Tories think municipal governments can manage it.

But local governments just don't have the money or the clout to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine.

In York Region, developers have already paved over a third of this environmentally sensitive ridge of sand and gravel left over from the last ice age — and if politicians don't take action soon, it will be a lot more.

• In Richmond Hill, three major subdivision plans are on the table, including the 428-home Oak Ridges Farm Co-Tenancy. Provincial consultants have raised concerns about the impact of these subdivisions on groundwater.

• In Whitchurch-Stouffville, Clublink Corporation is planning a tennis centre, golf course, hotel and about 1,000 homes for a 650-acre parcel of land near Woodbine Avenue and Stouffville Road.

Although the moraine represents some of the last vestiges of nature in the southern, urban part of the region, this isn't just a 'tree-hugger' issue.

The quantity and quality of water we have in the Greater Toronto Area is determined directly by the moraine. From one side of the ridge water runs north into Lake Simcoe, from the other it runs to Lake Ontario.

If we allow it to be ruined, our quality of life will suffer — and our economy with it.

The former NDP government declared a provincial interest in the moraine and had a position paper prepared in 1994, but nothing was done about it.

The Mike Harris government has since left the matter in the hands of municipalities. York, Peel and Durham regions have conducted a joint study to devise a long-term strategy to protect the moraine.

The problem is that most of the moraine is privately owned — in many cases by developers who will want to be compensated if they aren't allowed to build.

No municipal government can afford to buy large amounts of land at market price.

The province hasn't offered any funding, nor has it offered to change planning legislation to give municipalities the power to stop development on environmentally sensitive land.

Right now, developers can appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board — a provincial agency — if their projects aren't approved within a couple of months. Some have already done just that. The municipal board could allow the subdivisions to be built without approvals from the towns or the region.

It probably wouldn't do so if the province sent a signal that protecting natural areas was a priority. Instead, the province's Natural Resources minister recently endorsed the sale of a small piece of publicly owned and undeveloped land at Bloomington and Bathurst streets in Aurora to a developer.

The Save the Oak Ridges Moraine environmental group has asked the province to freeze all development on the moraine, a strategy that would, at least, buy some time.

However, the landowners, the province — and probably most municipalities — would find that unpalatable.

The alternative, if the province won't take leadership of protecting the moraine, is to listen to the regions and give them what they need to do the job. Planning Act changes that put some teeth in local environmental controls; funding to acquire particularly sensitive properties and clear guidelines to let the municipal board know that the moraine is a priority.

And they need it soon, while there are still some natural areas to be protected. Its 160 kilometres long,

# OPINION



Doug Devine

## Councillors failed to stand up for taxpayers

In a compelling example of York's shrinking world, a recent decision by Aurora council could have a negative impact on taxpayers across the region.

By a 5-4 margin, Aurora councillors rejected a proposal to ban all future growth in their town — a disappointing vote that affects everyone living or operating a business in York Region.

That's because at the heart of Aurora's proposed ban was the undeniable fact that under new provincial rules, existing residents and businesses are being forced to shoulder a much greater share of the capital costs associated with growth.

Using the logical argument that growth should pay for growth, towns have long been collecting development fees on new homes and businesses to pay for the construction or addition of services, such as hospitals, recreation centres, arenas, parks and libraries.

But the Mike Harris government decided these so-called soft services should no longer be fully funded by new construction.

That will have a huge impact on property taxes across the region. York's three hospitals estimate they will need \$80 million from property taxes to accommodate growth.

An estimate of Aurora's future growth costs (not including hospitals) concluded local taxes will have to jump by 9 to 13 per cent over the next eight years, just to maintain the current level of services.

That prompted Deputy Mayor John West to propose an all-out ban on growth. But his plan was rejected by a slim majority of councillors who feared the Ontario Municipal Board would over-rule them.

They may be right, given the OMB's pro-development track record, but they missed a golden opportunity to act like real politicians and stand up for the rights of the people they were elected to represent.

What West and his supporters understand is that it's their job to tell the province the people of Aurora do not want to share the cost of future growth, especially since anyone who moved here in the past decade has already paid a whopping development fee to cover their own growth-related costs.

Now that Aurora council has whimped out, will any other York Region councillors — or Tory MPPs — take up the fight?

Or were they all just grandstanding during election campaigns when they vowed to stand up for the rights of local residents?

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Real world requires police to be armed

Re: *Canada should adopt British gun control system*, Letters, Sept. 2

Everyone is entitled to their opinion and mine differs somewhat from that of Allan B. Chamberlain's.

First of all, if you legally own a handgun, it has to be registered and kept under lock and key. All other firearms must at least have a trigger lock, and gun registry for these is not far off.

As for police officers not carrying firearms, and only being issued one when they are called upon to arrest anyone believed to be dangerous, this is completely ludicrous.

Obviously, Chamberlain does not read the newspapers very much, or is unaware of what the real world is like.

I am a police officer who works in the downtown core of Toronto. I frequently come in contact with dangerous persons who carry weapons, whether it be a gun or a knife.

We, as a police service, are constantly called upon to arrest these people, with little or no time to prepare. For this person to suggest that only a few officers carry guns is completely asinine.

And by the way, all police officers are fully trained in how to use their weapons.

MARK MILNE  
STOUFFVILLE

### Eaton's staff will miss sharing in customers' lives

Re: *Favourite Eaton's employee will be*

missed, Letters, Sept. 14

I have been the recipient of compliments regarding the performance of my duties as an Eaton's sales associate.

I started at Eaton's Markville 17 years ago when the store first opened. I think I will be one of the few employees to have started and left from the same location.

I do appreciate the comments of the Ponsford family, however, I also feel that the compliments must be shared with all of those fellow Eaton's associates and managers I had the pleasure of working with over the years.

I watched a new store grow up and become a place where customers became friends. Our staff became a family and we shared the fun and pleasure of meeting and helping our customers.

We shared the joys and sorrows of our customers' and co-workers' families. New babies, marriages and other events were shared with us in the course of a shopping trip.

We had our moments when we counted to 10, but carried on to provide our Gold Standard level of customer service that we would expect if we were the customer.

When the doors are closed, I will miss my associates and long-term customers, but the experiences and memories of 17 years at Eaton's Markville will always be a significant part of my life. I might even miss working Christmas Eve, rushing home to prepare for Christmas Day and back to work on Boxing Day.

Thank you, Eaton's, for a memorable 17 years.

ELAINE STOVER  
MARKHAM

## Stouffville Tribune

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