

# ETCETERA

## THEY'RE WAGING GREEN WAR



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Gloria Marsh, member of a group called the Kettle Lakes Coalition, is fighting to save the Oak Ridges Moraine from development.

### LAKE SIMCOE'S FUTURE IS ALSO IN JEOPARDY

The Oak Ridges Moraine is the major battleground for environmentalists in York Region, but Lake Simcoe, where some of its rivers flow, could be next.

The lake, which adds an estimated \$160 million to the local economy, has been sick for decades.

The problem is an excess nutrient called phosphorus, a byproduct of local agriculture and urban growth. It causes algae blooms and weed growth that threaten the lake.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority reduces phosphorus by helping farmers and landowners make improvements, but since the provincial government slashed its funds, its ability to undertake such projects "has diminished dramatically," Gayle Wood, the authority's chief administrative officer, said this summer.

Meanwhile, she said, new development is sending more phosphorus into the lake.

Lake trout no longer breed in Lake Simcoe and other fish must be stocked or they would disappear.

Lacks a Champion: Simcoe, at least on the York Region side of its watershed, seems not to have any organized body of volunteers who could fight to restore its health.

The Holland River: Of the rivers flowing through the north of the region from the moraine to the lake, the Holland is the worst off. The East Holland watershed, flowing through Aurora and Newmarket, is under pressure from their growing populations, while the lower part of the river in Bradford is in "severely

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### What approach are environmentalists taking in their green battle?

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

**O**n an old farm field in Richmond Hill are the beginnings of a new forest. First came the aspen and sumac, then the beeches, a few white pine, the odd maple.

But this rolling countryside on the Oak Ridges Moraine, while appreciated by hikers, cyclists and the thieves who dump an occasional stolen car here, is on private land. Glenn De Baeremaeker speaks its obituary.

"Your typical subdivision street," he says, as we start moving uphill. "On each side of us will be manicured front lawns.

Later, De Baeremaeker, Gloria Marsh and Ramona Wall, members of a group called the Kettle

Lakes Coalition — reach a sun-shadowed valley of mature hemlock and white pine, deep forested backyards of big estates.

You can just hear traffic on Stouffville Road, where York Region is preparing to link Bayview Avenue through the forest nearby to its northern half. The stands of hemlock outlasted the old lumber barons, but can they remain if the moraine turns urban?

"This is prime real estate," De Baeremaeker says.

There is a conflict, particularly on the moraine, between planning for growth and protecting the environment. Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell said last month.

"They're kind of like two trains coming down the track," he said, heading toward each other.



An abandoned car along the Oak Ridges Moraine — a sad statement of the type of action that prompts environmentalists to launch their battles.

But with politicians like Bell riding both trains — saying they can build more houses and still protect the environment — the real battle is over what approach to take.

The region's municipal councils play ball with the developers. Towns like

Richmond Hill, knowing they might get almost no environmental protection from Ontario Municipal Board rulings, ask developers to set aside a bit more green space, a woodlot or a buffer zone here or there.

And if a development proposal doesn't jive with the town's plan, "we sit down and have a heart-to-heart with the applicant," Bell explained recently.

More and more, though, groups of citizens in the region are unwilling to accept these compromises.

They want to see forests, rivers, farms or wildlife habitat protected, period. And suddenly, thanks mainly to growing concern for the moraine, they have a chance to be

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