

# 11th hour for moraine

*Richmond Hill not protecting enough, province says*

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Ryan Michael of Image Works Signs and Marketing secured one of several signs in Richmond Hill promoting the save the moraine movement.

The issue of moraine is one facing the entire Greater Toronto Area, not just her town. Richmond Hill is simply the focus of the discussion today.

Town staff say urbanizing the moraine can protect environmental features by using the highest standards possible.

Yet the province has indicated the town isn't protecting enough and doesn't know enough about groundwater resources.

A Municipal Affairs Ministry letter released last week stated a comprehensive water resource study is needed to address concerns from many sources.

"Development should only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the existing quantity, quality and rate of flow

into kettle lakes and kettle bogs is replicated," it stated.

The province also wants a natural 600-metre-wide corridor through the area, "as this is the last opportunity for an east-west connecting link" across the moraine.

Babcock said the town is responding to development pressures. Already, 18 applications, covering half the subject land, going to an Ontario Municipal Board hearing in May.

Babcock also said the town knows developers will fight the town's higher green standards at the OMB. Last week, she faced "40 of the top lawyers representing landowners," she said.

But worst of all would be for the town to face the OMB hearing without OPA 200's protective policies for the area, Babcock maintained. "Just saying no (to OPA 200) is not going to protect the environment."

The Urban Development Institute argued its proposals are for "smart growth" and not a threat to groundwater.

"We, too, want to provide a legacy that we can all be proud of," UDI president Stephen Kaiser said in a letter.

Save The Rouge Valley System president Glenn De Baeremaeker called OPA 200 a "disaster waiting to happen."

Although the town claims it can protect 35 per cent of the moraine, study of the plan's fine print reveals many loopholes for developers to reduce that amount, he said in a release, arguing little more than 10 per cent of the town's moraine will be protected.



Joan Ransberry

## It takes a farmer to know a farmer

I was in his company for three minutes before we had a parting of the ways.

You don't have to be a farmer to hold Ontario's top farm post, Agriculture Minister Ernie Hardeman told me during a brief interview Thursday in Sutton.

"I don't see it as a detriment or an attribute, one way or another," Hardeman said.

"I couldn't disagree more. When Ontario's premier decides who gets what when making up the cabinet, farmers notice. Farmers want one of their own to hold the reins of their industry. If you doubt this, here's a test: Rent an arena, fill it with farmers and have former federal agriculture minister Eugene Whalen walk in.

Whalen will arrive wearing his trademark green Stetson and he'll get a standing ovation.

Farmers love Whalen for many reasons, first and foremost, he's one of their own. Because he's a farmer, Whalen understands the agricultural industry and, most importantly, he understands the lifestyle. Maybe Whalen didn't fix all things, but he knew when and why they were broken.

York Region farmers did extend a warm welcome to Hardeman. While he's not a farmer, he's not too far out of the loop. Hardeman is not just another Tory suit.

Before seeking political office, Hardeman owned and operated a seed business in Oxford County. His customer base was made up of farmers. The farmers and Hardeman got along well. The farmers liked him then. They like him still.

And, while I may disagree with him and question why he can't do more to help such a critical industry, I like him too.

Farming is serious business in the Greater Toronto Area, and in York Region in particular. Hardeman knows this. There were about 4,500 farmers producing more than \$585 million in gross farm receipts in 1976. Overall, GTA farms have a higher productivity than do farms in other parts of the province.

Despite the economic importance and vitality of the industry, life is not easy down on the farm. The future viability of the industry is threatened due to the rapid loss of prime agricultural land.

In the past 20 years, we've lost more than 150,000 acres of prime farm land in the GTA. Meanwhile, failure on the part of government to implement agricultural land-use preservation policies could lead to further reduction of the land base.

If food can't be produced here at home, it'll be imported and, consequently, we'll feel it at the grocery checkout counter. We'll not only pay much more for our food, we'll kiss the quality of Ontario-grown produce goodbye.

If we don't wake up, we'll see food price hikes like we've never seen before.

Today, it costs about \$90 a week to feed a family of four. If our food-producing land continues to disappear and we end up importing food, someday we'll sit around talking about the good old days when a tomato tasted like a tomato and when we could feed the family for under \$100 a week.

## Volunteers sought to revive board

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Recently, one person has been keeping the local Block Parents alive. Barb Rogina has been doing all the work. "But the situation can't continue," MacBride said.

Block Parents started in London in 1968. The program rapidly expanded across Canada over the next five years, while a national committee was set up in 1983.

Block Parents is now country-wide with more than 1,000 communities as members. Today, there are 500,000 police-screened community members.

"The Block Parent program is the largest, volunteer-operated, child safety crime prevention program in Canada," MacBride said.

Executive duties include working with schools to promote the association and signing up new members. A secretary and treasurer are also needed.

Anyone interested in helping to save the local Block Parent Association can call 294-5868.



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Marianne MacBride, the Ontario chairperson of Block Parents, promotes the association that could close in Stouffville.

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