

# Is King's future full of development?

WHILE RESIDENTS FEAR UNBRIDLED DEVELOPMENT, MAYOR MARGARET BLACK SAYS THE PLAN IS IN PLACE FOR CONTROLLED GROWTH

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

King City is asking questions. Now that the path is clear for the Big Pipe to come to the little town, residents are asking: Will it mean unbridled growth? Since King City sits on the Oak Ridges Moraine, will it eventually spell disaster for the much cherished moraine? Will it solve the town's health-threatening sewage problem or will the pipe have little effect on anyone in King City?

One thing is certain: King City took note Tuesday when the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) ruled in favour of the township over the controversial Secondary Plan for the King City lands. The decision to approve the plan means the York-Durham Sewage System, known as the Big Pipe, is on its way and could be in town in two years.



MARGARET BLACK: Mayor says the OMB decision helps community control growth.

Mayor Margaret Black is thrilled with the OMB's 28-page ruling, delivered by OMB chairperson Ronald Emo.

"It's taken 11 years," said Black. "The medical officer of health reported a terrible problem. This looks after it."

The issue has been all the talk in King City. It's been hashed over in restaurants, in donut shops, hair salons and, of course, in local garages.

Jerry Goliszek owns King City Service Centre on Keele Street. He knows King City. It's his place of business and it's been home for 30 years. Goliszek doesn't mind admitting, at this stage in life, he wants a small, quiet place to live.

The hookup to the system may be better for the environment, but I worry that King City will end up like Maple or

Richmond Hill," said Goliszek. Under the government process, explosive and immediate development is simply not possible. A developer can't pull into town and start digging holes in the ground for houses, stressed township planner Stephen Kitchen.

King City is not about to resemble Maple, the mayor said. King City's current population of about 5,000 is set to climb to 10,000 over 20 years, and to 12,000 in 25 years, as set out in the Secondary Plan. "This is not out-of-control growth," said Black, who was raised in King Township.

"When I was a little girl, about 300 people lived in King City. Today, there are 5,000. That's a far larger percentage of increase than what is being proposed for the next 25 years," she added.

While some continue to argue the point, the pipe size itself will restrict the number of users, further protecting King City from massive growth, said Black.

Gord Orr knows King City inside out and backwards. He's called the town home since 1949. Orr acknowledges that a contamination problem was identified by regional health officials.

"Some areas of King City need this sewer system," said Orr. "But not everyone needs it. It's got its pros, but it's got its cons, too. With this (Big Pipe), King City will open up like Maple. That could happen if the elected representatives go against the people."

The OMB decision noted opponents to the plan fear urban sprawl creeping inexorably toward King City from the abutting communities of Maple in Vaughan and Oak Ridges in Richmond Hill.

Elizabeth Howson, a professional land-use planner, told the hearing that the plan "contains appropriate policies to protect the unique character of King City."

The valleys of the East Humber River and its tributaries create King City's "unique natural environment," said Howson. This significant natural heritage feature is augmented by low-density development featuring large detached homes, Howson further pointed out.

King City is now free to accept low- and medium-density development. In its Environmentally First plan, some 37 per cent of lands are classified environmental, giving the further protection



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Jerry Goliszek, who owns King City Service Centre, says he wants a small and quiet place to live.

from over-development.

King City resident Jill Robin is not laying out the welcome mat for the Big Pipe.

"This is going to destroy the village," said Robin, a resident for 18 years. "I'm moving out. We're going to turn out like Maple, Richmond Hill and Newmarket. Council is letting it happen."

King City is represented by Ward 1 Councillor Jane Underhill. While not surprised with the OMB ruling, Underhill is very disappointed. "This was politically manipulated in my opinion," said Underhill.

Once the pipe arrives, it will open up the flood gates to development, Underhill insists.

Underhill fought long and hard against the move to have the Big Pipe come to King City. With virtually no support from her colleagues on council, Underhill fought alone.

"My hands were tied. I am only one voice," said Underhill. "It was frustrating throughout. The winners are the developers. The losers are the environment and this township."

Hookup to the Big Pipe will cost the average homeowner in King City between \$9,800 and \$13,600. Black plans to send a letter to all King City homeowners explaining the process, including its cost. As well, residents will be informed that help will be available for hardship cases, Black added.

One of the duties of a local

council is to look after planning matters, Black pointed out.

"Establishing a plan, which includes approving the Big Pipe, is about guiding King City toward a rational way of handling growth, away from an inconsistent jumble of sporadic and not always inspired residential and commercial development that has occurred in both King Township and our surrounding municipalities," the mayor said.

Living in one of the quaintest parts of King City, Burton Grove residents prefer the status quo.

"You couldn't find a better place to live than here," said Verdi Venchiarutti.

Once the Big Pipe arrives, development will follow, Venchiarutti said.

"I have no doubt. There will be development. I think big money controls councils today. The developers, not us, have the money."

The democratic process was "served well" throughout the handling of this issue, said Ward 2 Councillor Alf Budweth.

Local ratepayers, including environmentalists, formed the coalition group King City Preserve the Village and appealed to the OMB to reverse the council decision approving the planning document.

The hearing got under way in mid-November and dragged on until the end of January. It cost the town \$350,000; the citizens' group \$150,000.

## Critics say pipe is no answer to septic woes

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

King City has leaking septic systems, but hooking the village to the Big Pipe is not the answer, some King Township residents argued this week.

A local "stand alone" sewage system can solve the septic problem and control growth for the community on the Oak Ridges Moraine, say critics of this week's Ontario Municipal Board decision authorizing an extension of the pipe to King City.

OMB member Ronald Emo, who released the 28-page ruling, told participants early in the hearing that he considered arguments about alternative systems beyond the board's jurisdiction and later added they were "essentially hearsay."

Developers on the moraine, in places such as Richmond Hill and Uxbridge, have argued replacing aging septics with a trunk sewer brings a net environmental benefit to the area.

Most residents believed something had to be done about leaking septics, said Nola Burbidge, chairperson of Concerned Citizens of King Township. "But we wanted it to be a communal system."

In 1997, York Region medical officer of health Dr. Helena Jaczek said 146 King City septics had malfunctioned since 1988 and speculated many more had been repaired secretly by residents. The region also noted unacceptable levels of E-coli bacteria in the East Humber River.

Dorothy Izzard, a resident who represented Save The Oak Ridges Moraine at the hearing, doubted a sewage hookup would improve the quality of the East Humber. "Any sewage leakage to the river was minimal, if there was any."

In his decision, Emo noted "a somewhat grudging acceptance that there is a problem with septic systems in the older part of the community" and that hydrogeological experts agreed "that some 17 per cent of King City's septic systems were malfunctioning."

"No list of failing septic systems was produced at the hearing," said Bob Martin of Kettleby.

Mary Bromley of Nobleton Alert noted the community of Nobleton, unlike King City, has been promised a local system. "There's a terrible lack of imagination around these days," she said. "The record is that unfettered development follows the (York-Durham) pipe."

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