

# Moraine development to be rejected

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Staff Writer

Richmond Hill councillors will probably reject a plan to develop a key part of the Oak Ridges Moraine, but the move won't be enough to protect the natural area once and for all, environmentalists charge.

Residents are expected to voice their opinions tonight about two development applications that would put more than 2,700 homes on a 600-acre site near Bond Lake. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. in the Premiere Ballroom and Convention Centre at 9019 Leslie St.

Town planners have recommended the applications be rejected.

"I suspect a majority of council, including myself, will support that," Mayor Bill Bell said.

Environmentalist Glenn De Baeremaeker said the recom-

mendation is a good first step to protecting the moraine, the mound of sand and gravel that is the source of the Rouge, Don, Humber and other area rivers.

"We're very pleased that the town has acknowledged what we've been saying all along," said De Baeremaeker, president of Save the Rouge Valley System. "It's such a horrible development application I don't think council has any choice but to reject it."

De Baeremaeker said the town should keep excessive development off the moraine for good by creating a large natural park.

But Bell called the recommendation, which doesn't mention the creation of a park, "fairly powerful".

He questioned how officials would acquire the park and who would maintain it.

Several development applications on the moraine are to be heard by the OMB in May.

## OUTDOORS



Mike Hayakawa

## 'Ice out' supports warming trend

In recent years, it was safe to say the last remnants of ice on Lake Simcoe would dissipate sometime this month or, by the latest, in early May.

With the premature arrival of spring this year, though, such was not the case.

The Ministry of Natural Resources Lake Simcoe Fisheries Assessment Unit reported this year's "ice out" on the fifth largest body of water in Ontario was the earliest since records were kept in 1989.

For the record, the ministry reported Lake Simcoe's last ice out took place March 25, when "exceptionally warm weather combined with high southwest winds quickly broke apart the remaining unsafe ice flows on Lake Simcoe", said Ron Allen, a ministry spokesperson from the fisheries assessment unit at Sibbald Point.

This year's ice out surpasses the prior earliest date of April 1, 1998. That year, the weather phenomenon known as El Niño was a contributing factor.

What makes this year's early ice out even more remarkable was that February saw some of the thickest ice on the lake in years.

Ministry officials and ice hut operators noted in early February that many sections of the lake had better ice conditions than last year. Some areas had over two feet of good ice this year.

With the early disappearance of ice, anglers who pursue the many species inhabiting the lake might be forced to make adjustments to their fishing patterns.

"If we keep getting cold days, high winds and a falling barometer, conditions could stalemate," warned Wil Wegman, a spokesperson for the ministry's Aurora District Office. "But if it gets warmer, things will speed up. We're already two to three weeks ahead of schedule."

Wegman could remember days when ice flows were evident on the lake during the annual Orillia Perch Festival, which runs from April 15 to May 6.

My general rule was that the run took place anywhere between April 15 and 25. That's not likely to happen this year with the dwindling runs of these delectable little delights over the last few years.

Anglers waiting for the lake trout opener on May 13 might be forced to use downriggers earlier than normal. Running flatline at that time might be rendered useless if water temperatures warm up as fish will move into deeper depths.

Perhaps the signs of this year's early ice out support the notion we are, in fact, experiencing global warming.



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