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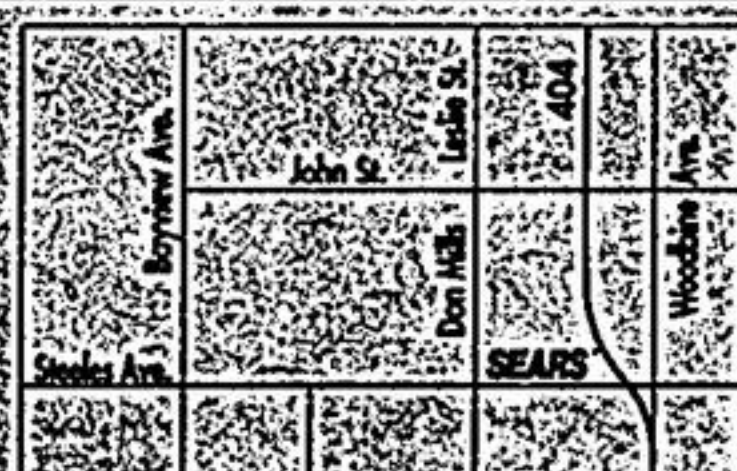
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Widen green spaces in moraine, U.S. expert tells OMB hearing

BY SARAH PARKER
Staff Writer

The wider the green corridor you allow, the more wildlife you will save, a world-renowned conservation expert told an Ontario Municipal Board hearing into development on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Reed Noss, an Oregon-based scientist who served on an environmental panel for U.S. President Bill Clinton, testified Tuesday that a 50-metre-wide corridor isn't enough to preserve species on the moraine.

"The wider the corridor, the more species it will serve," he said. On the other hand, if development is allowed to split the moraine into small green spaces, wildlife will suffer, he said.

Earlier in the hearing, environmental planner and developers' witness Derek Coleman had testified 50 metres was sufficient to protect the environment. The province is asking that the corridors be 200 metres wide.

The OMB, which resumed its

hearing this week after a month-long break, is to decide whether to allow developers to build 8,000 new homes on either side of Yonge Street at Stouffville Road. The Town of Richmond had earlier turned down the developers' applications, citing protection of the environment.

Noss is the key witness for Save the Rouge Valley System and the first to testify on behalf of environmental groups.

During cross-examination yesterday, development industry lawyer Tom Lederer questioned whether Noss' experience as an advisor in creating green corridors in Florida and elsewhere in the United States qualified him as an expert on land use in Ontario.

Noss, who said his position is one of "peer review" on scientific data, is known for his vision of implementing a series of connected green corridors throughout North America.

"It's been my experience that the most successful planning

process combines local experts with those who have a detached, outside view," he said.

Noss agreed a balance must be struck between development and preservation, but he also testified that the Richmond Hill stretch of the moraine contains some of the most sensitive land.

His main concern was that the species, ranging from amphibians and birds to white-tailed deer and bears, would not be able to thrive without room to obtain food, to maintain habitat and to procreate.

Cross-examination of Noss continues today. Noss must return to the U.S. Friday, but before he does, he will host a public lecture tonight at the Richmond Hill municipal offices.

Glenn De Baereinaeker, president of Save the Rouge Valley System, called the cross-examination "nit-picking".

"There have been no knock-out punches on the developers' side," he said. "Reed Noss has delivered quite a few."

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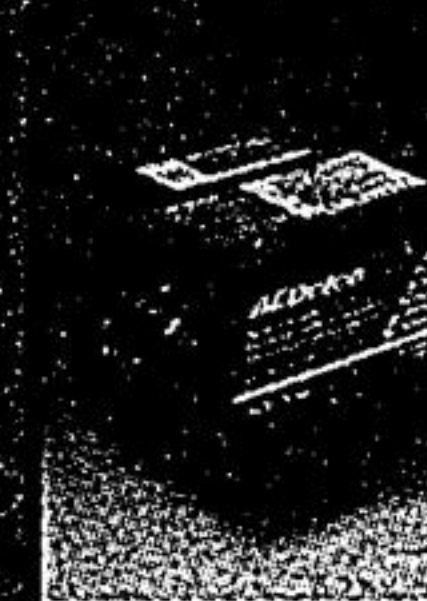


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