

Moraine win energizes environmentalists

Expect debate on pesticides, ecological footprints, says Whitchurch-Stouffville politician

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

The misty shores of Bond Lake seemed as good a place as any to break out the champagne.

Sipped in a December drizzle, the bubbly was a long-awaited drink this month for environmentalists Gregor Beck, Debbe Crandall and Glenn De Baeremaeker.

Save The Oak Ridges Moraine formed 12 years ago in King City to fight for the landform.

When the province's Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act finally passed on Dec. 13 it was time to celebrate.

President of Save The Rouge Valley System, De Baeremaeker predicted that after the moraine defenders unexpected success, 2002 will be a year of continued advances in protection.

"The momentum's just starting," he said before heading to the toast at Bond, a deep kettle that, instead of being surrounded by thousands of new homes, will be part of a moraine park in Richmond Hill.

"People in the '905 belt' have figured out you can fight City Hall and you can win."

Waiting to pop the champagne cork was a metaphor frequently used while people waited for an opportunity to fix the legislation's many "loopholes."

Now that the plan is here, York Region and its municipalities have 12 months to adjust their official plans and two years to prepare a watershed plan and a water budget — less time than given to other areas on the moraine.

Debbe Crandall, executive director of STORM, is among those who think this local work must be carefully watched.

"We have to make sure municipalities implement this plan as we fought to have it written," she said.

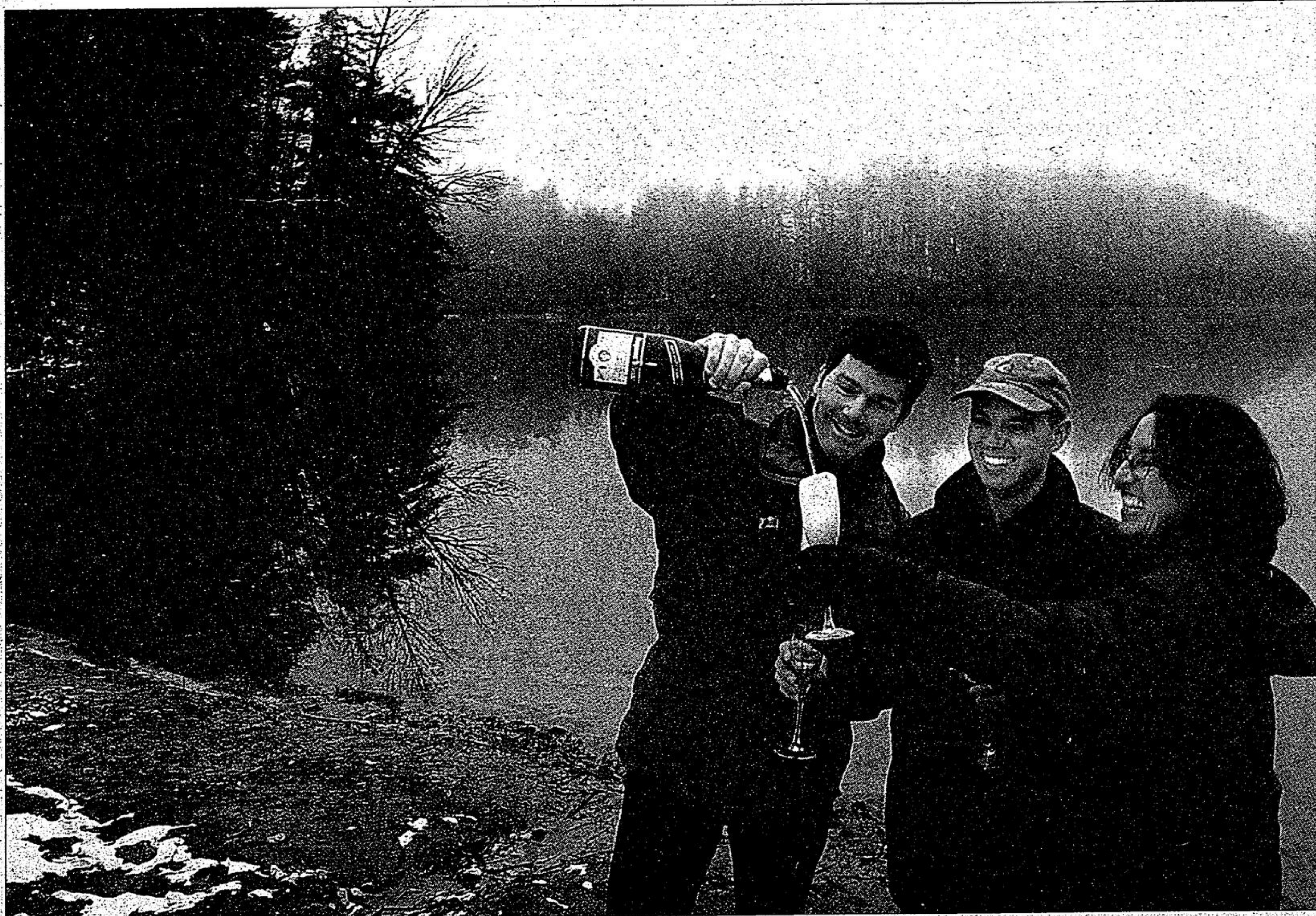
More alarming to environmentalists is the number of new roads still possible through the moraine, including the Bayview Avenue extension now underway and the planned continuation of Hwy. 427.

An extension of Stouffville Road west of Yonge Street, they believe, could threaten the health of another kettle, Philips Lake.

"We have to stop it before it begins," Crandall said.

Some fear the provincial plan will ultimately fail if, as a result of the moraine being saved, suburban sprawl accelerates to the north and south.

"None of us were involved to



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Glenn De Baeremaeker, president of the Save the Rouge Valley environmental lobby group, pours champagne for Gregor Beck, conservation director of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, and Debbe Crandall, executive director of Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) as they celebrate the designation the Bond Lake area in Richmond Hill as part of an Oak Ridges Moraine park. The provincial government's move stopped construction of potentially thousands of homes in the environmentally-sensitive area.

protect the moraine at the expense of other areas," said Beck, a biologist and conservation director for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

'Even if we can get 50 per cent of the people to think about what they're doing, that's a huge drop in pesticide use.'

— Mark Carroll, GTA Wetlands Watch

Expect environmental education on how we live and work to be stressed in 2002, suggested Mark Carroll, a Whitchurch-Stouffville councillor and program co-ordinator for an environmental group, GTA Wetlands Watch.

The debate on pesticides and alternatives to using them will come into the spotlight, he predicted.

"Even if we can get 50 per cent of the people to think about what they're doing, that's a huge drop in pesticide use."

The Toronto Region Conservation Authority is popularizing an idea called the Ecological Footprint — the resources a community or an individual uses in a year — as part of its Living City campaign.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's volunteer environmental committee is bringing in an expert to explain the concept next month.

"They say if everybody in the world lived like an American, it would take four and a half Earths to supply us," Carroll noted.

The Lake Simcoe Region

Conservation Authority will continue its initiatives to control the lake's excessive phosphorus load and is adding more stations to test surface water quality.

'We have to make sure municipalities implement this plan as we fought to have it written.'

— Debbe Crandall, executive director of STORM

Perpetual land preservation through donations or conservation easements is a method that took giant local steps forward in 2001.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land

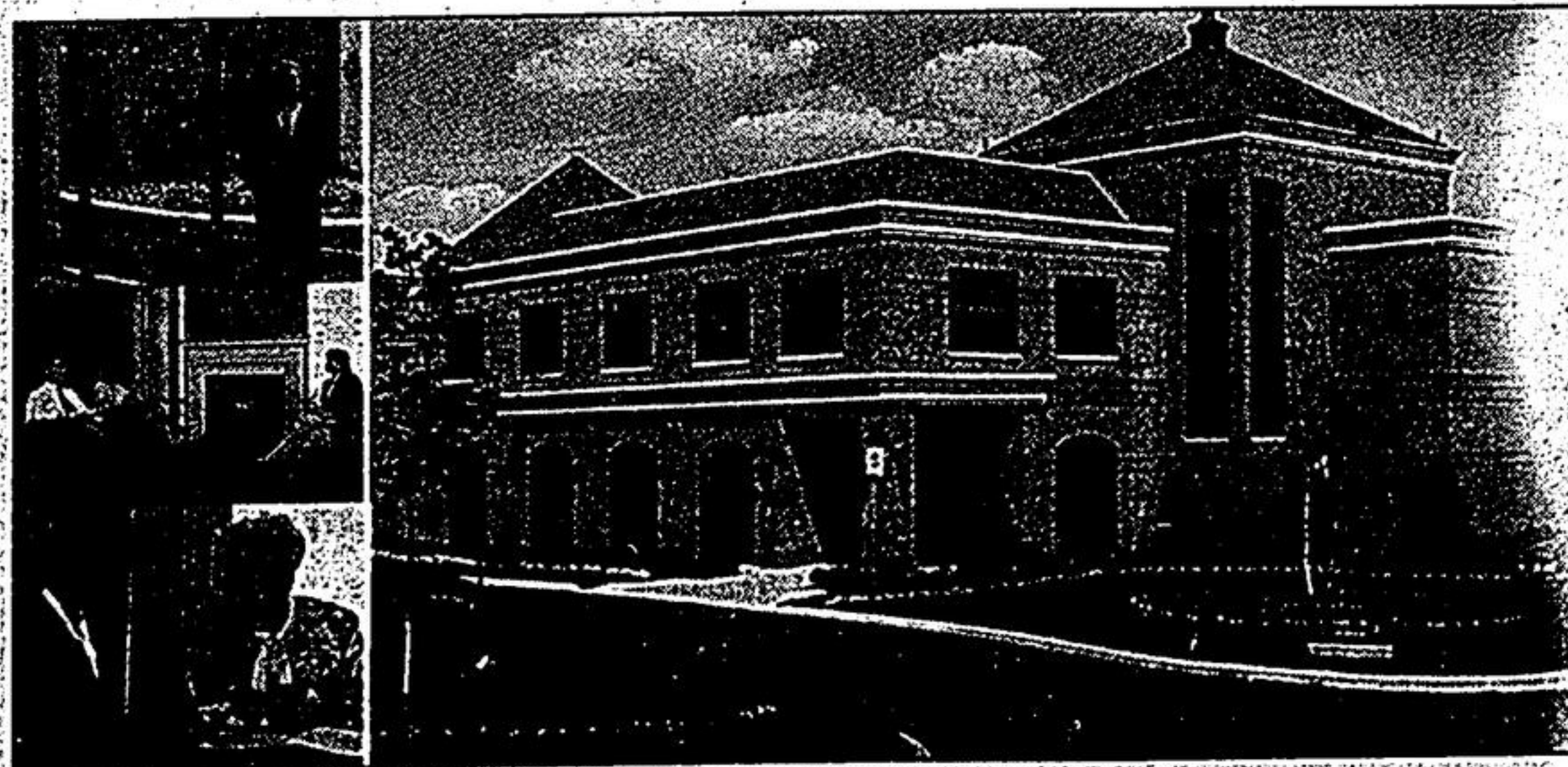
Trust attracted its first donors and Lake Simcoe-area naturalists said they intend to form a trust of their own.

The province intends to help by establishing an Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation to secure land and improve the local trail system.

John Riley, an interim board member, said he's confident the foundation can open for business halfway through the year.

Initial provincial investment is believed to be \$15 million but Riley, science director for the Nature Conservancy of Canada, said the board will look for matching funds from municipal and other governments.

"Frankly, we're going to have to grow it (the investment) somehow," he said.



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