

impact of various types of development within the region.

Development on the Durham waterfront has often been done piecemeal, under general direction of the local waterfront municipality. It was the Commission's view, articulated in *Watershed*, (and with which Durham concurred) that the Region coordinate local waterfront plans in a regional context. Although discussions have been undertaken, no significant steps towards a regional waterfront plan have been achieved within the last year.

Action is needed soon on the Region's proposal to prepare a waterfront plan to encompass all or part of Durham's Lake Ontario waterfront, from Pickering to Newcastle, in an amendment to the Regional Official Plan. The Commission supports this initiative, which is to address earlier *Watershed* recommendations, recreational opportunities, public access, wetland conservation, and other issues.

Development proposals have been submitted for extensive tracts of waterfront land in such areas as Ajax, Whitby, and Newcastle, while smaller-scale projects have been proposed for Pickering. The Oshawa Harbour Area is also the subject of discussion on revitalizing the port area and increasing public waterfront use while maintaining the environmental integrity of the land.

Durham needs to assume a leadership role by offering planning that is environmentally sound, and takes into account the cumulative effects of economic activities and community development on the natural and built environments.

Local municipalities also need to have the tools to implement such an approach to planning at their level; furthermore, co-operative action is needed locally,

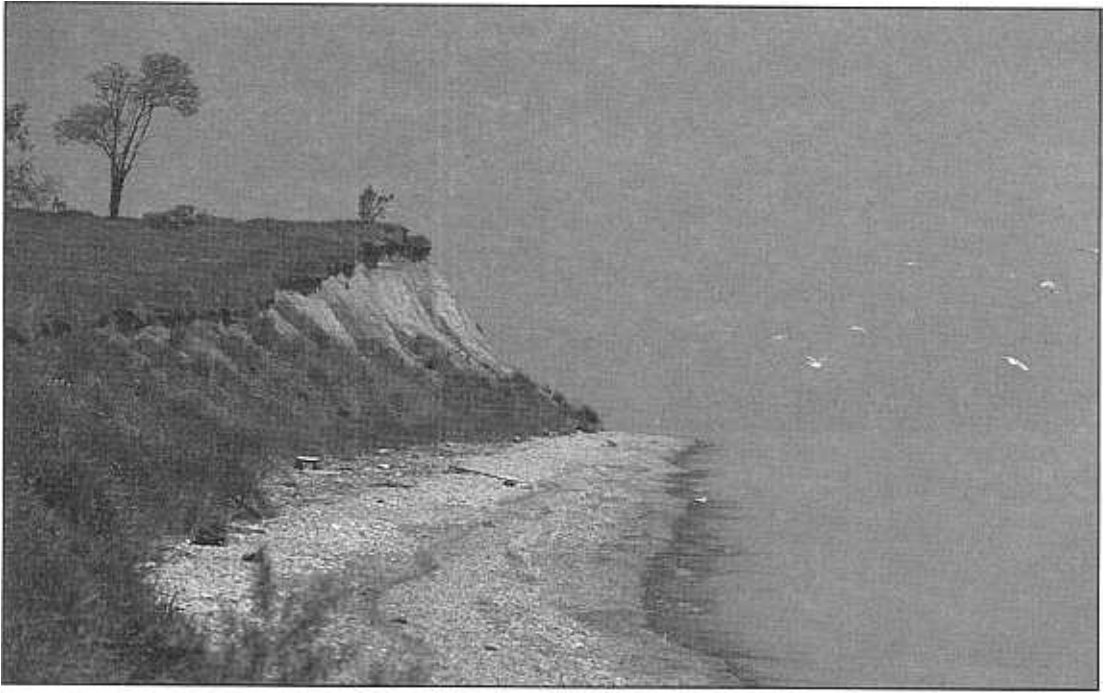
provincially, and federally, as well as amongst those levels, in concert with citizens and appropriate private-sector parties. This would ensure the necessary support and acceptance of environmental imperatives, the adoption of principles and the implementation of guidelines. For example, the region could work with local waterfront municipalities to implement a greenway strategy as a tool to protect ecological integrity and the natural areas which exist today. Inadequate alternatives include piecing together remaining parcels of land after each development has been approved or losing these areas to other uses such as golf courses.

Ontario Hydro has indicated its willingness to co-operate in ensuring safe access to the waterfront in areas near the Pickering and Darlington Nuclear Generating Stations in Durham and elsewhere on their waterfront lands.

As noted in Chapter 3, the Province has recognized the need to protect the moraine. An expression of Provincial Interest was made recently, interim guidelines for planning decisions were established, and a two-year study of long-term protective measures is scheduled to be completed in 1993.

The Durham Regional Plan recognizes the Oak Ridges Moraine as a major natural feature to be protected; a similar reference should be made to Durham's 62 kilometres (39 miles) of Lake Ontario shoreline, which is fairly developed in the west, but has expanses of relatively pristine waterfront land in the east, including bluffs that rise as high as 20 metres (66 feet).

In addition, significant natural areas, river valleys, and headwaters flowing south from the moraine should be protected as part of the Greater Toronto bioregion,



Newcastle shoreline

including the Altona Forest in Pickering and the Ganaraska River flowing through Newcastle and Port Hope into Lake Ontario.

TOWN OF PICKERING

Pickering was established in the early 1800s and the first town meeting was held there in 1811. Population had escalated to approximately 8,000 by the mid-1800s, and was double that a century later. As recently as the 1950s, farming was still the major source of wealth within the township. With the development of Highway 401, developers began scouting the area for land with residential promise and found it on the waterfront. The most westerly waterfront municipality in Durham, Pickering is home to more than 50,000 people today.

Pickering has traditionally relied on the MTRCA to take the lead role in planning and land acquisition for its eight kilometres (five miles) of shoreline. The conservation

authority's ability to undertake these responsibilities successfully, as well as the historic debate over the ownership of Frenchman's Bay, has limited involvement in waterfront issues by the Town and its residents.

Debate about ownership of land under Frenchman's Bay and of part of the marshlands and the eastern shore, began in 1791 when the Township deeded parts of the bay to various people. By the mid-1800s, the deeds had been purchased by the Pickering Harbour and Road Joint Stock Company, which operated a busy commercial harbour in the bay until the 1920s.

The bay was purchased by the Pickering Harbour Company in 1965, but the argument has been made that, under the 1914 federal Beds of Navigable Waters Act, ownership of all such bodies of water reverted to the Crown in the absence of an express federal government grant or a legal determination; because neither of those

was made when the Pickering Harbour and Road Joint Stock Company owned the bay in 1914, the argument goes, the property reverted to the Crown at that time.

The status of the ownership of the bay and municipal control over land-use proposals is currently being considered by the courts; therefore, plans related to these lands and water bodies are dependent on resolving legal issues.

WATERSHED UPDATE

In December 1990, Pickering Town Council responded positively to the Commission's report, and concurred with the ecosystem approach and the nine principles. It also agreed with other recommendations, such as the idea of a Waterfront Trail from Burlington to Newcastle, and an immediate review of the Ontario Trees Act.

The Province of Ontario, responding to an earlier *Watershed* recommendation for a study of Frenchman's Bay — and recognizing that there are concerns about balancing development and conservation in the area and that there is no integrated analysis of the problem — commissioned a report on the bay's capacity to support additional development.

The study, completed in June 1991 by the Heritage Resources Centre (Nelson et al.) at the University of Waterloo, concluded that many land-use and environmental changes have occurred in the bay area in the last 35 years, and that many more will occur in the future. It also noted that the land-use changes have had an adverse impact on the marshes and on other environmental qualities of the bay area.

It also concluded that added research, communication, and co-ordination among government agencies, citizen, and corporate

groups were needed to discuss visions, goals, and objectives for the bay as a whole; this should be done before any decisions were made on which development proposals for the area should be allowed to proceed. In support of these conclusions, the report recommended that "a moratorium be declared on developments in the Bay and its borderlands until a co-ordinated conservation and development (sustainable development) strategy is prepared".

In the past few years, development in the Frenchman's Bay area has been challenged: residents have grouped together to speak against development, and the Town has begun to recognize that there is a lack of comprehensive policies and direction on the cumulative effect of development on the shoreline and the natural environment.

Response to the June 1991 *Frenchman's Bay, Ontario: Conservation and Sustainable Development* report includes general support from key provincial agencies, the Town of Pickering, and the MTRCA. They have agreed to put together terms of reference for the recommended sustainable development strategy.

In the meantime, the conservation authority and the Town are exploring the feasibility of acquiring land owned by Sandbury Building Corporation in the north-east end of Frenchman's Bay. Sandbury's current development plans include 39 townhomes on the tableland portion of the site, with public access on floodplain lands between the development and the bay. The site is currently designated for low-density residential use and would require rezoning if the project were to go ahead. The land at the north end of the bay, currently owned by the Pickering Harbour Company, is also subject to possible residential development



Frenchman's Bay

in the future on a site that includes environmentally significant marshes created by lake-filling many years ago.

Decisions regarding future land uses of the bay, including proposed development, should not be made until more is known about its environmental state.

LOCAL PLANNING INITIATIVES

In the near future, the Town of Pickering is likely to begin a comprehensive review of its 1981 District Plan; this is an important opportunity for the Town to revise its plan and to take the ecosystem approach it supported in its earlier response to *Watershed*.

The review should focus on establishing relationships among environmental, economic, and community features that would result in a healthier, more balanced ecosystem and improved quality of life.

Significant natural areas should be protected and enhanced, including the waterfront, major waterways, and Frenchman's Bay, while development proposals should be assessed to evaluate possible environmental effects.

TOWN OF AJAX

The present site of the Town of Ajax was once rolling farmland on the edge of Lake Ontario in Pickering Township. Used as an industrial site during the Second World War, the Town was later named after a British warship, HMS Ajax, symbol of courage and determination. Ajax became a post-war community; until 1950 it had no local government. It officially became a town in 1954, when the first Town Council and Public School Board were elected; in 1974, Ajax was amalgamated to include the former Town of Ajax, the Village of

Pickering, and portions of the Township of Pickering — which increased its size from less than 1214 hectares (3,000 acres) to more than 6475 hectares (16,000 acres). The combination of historic village homes, peaceful township farms, and a modern community make Ajax an interesting place in which to live, work, and play.

The town's population has grown from more than 23,000 residents in 1979 to more than 50,000 today, more than half of whom live in the waterfront area. Much of the six kilometres (four miles) of Ajax shoreline — from Duffin Creek east to Lakeridge Road — are given over to expanses of open space. This is the result of the Town's requirement of a 400-foot (122 metre) setback in numerous low-density residential neighbourhoods along the waterfront. MTRCA has also played a major role in managing these waterfront open spaces.

When Ajax residents look south from their waterfront neighbourhoods, they can see vast areas of manicured lawn between themselves and Lake Ontario. This view is disturbed in only one place along the residential waterfront, east of Harwood Avenue at the site of the Regional Water Treatment Plant. Proposed expansion of the plant would result in further encroachment of open-space lands. This use of waterfront lands is recognized as necessary, but is not acceptable to all nearby residents.

WATERSHED UPDATE

Last year, in addressing expansion of the Regional Water Treatment Plant, the Commission noted that “the proposed plant

will mean a loss of existing green space and will create a visual barrier to the waterfront.” It was recommended that “creative landscaping and building design should address these problems with a view to integrating the structure with the surrounding residential neighbourhood.” The Commission continues to support this view, citing the Metropolitan Toronto's R. C. Harris Water Filtration Plant, the largest facility of its kind, as a good example of an exquisitely designed public building. Rather than being

an eye-sore on the waterfront, the plant is considered by many people to be architecturally outstanding; its symmetry and terraced lawns are among its most engaging features.

But it is only in the past decade that architects have recognized the success of this structure and begun to give it the accolades it deserves.

The Region recognizes the need to preserve and enhance access and views to the lake in designing its Water Treatment Plant and landscaping the site.

Durham Region is currently awaiting the outcome of the Ministry of the Environment's review of the environmental study report on expanding the regional water supply plant on the Ajax waterfront. The Ministry has received requests to “bump-up” the categorization of this project from a Class environmental assessment to an individual environmental assessment; and has extended the review period indefinitely. Recent concerns about high tritium levels have led the Region to plan a further study of water quality in the near future.

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