

STORM hosts round table for eastern part of moraine

Save The Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition recently hosted a round-table discussion to hear concerns about possible impacts from large-scale energy infrastructure projects.

The discussion involved residents and representatives from Kawartha Lakes, Scugog, Clarington, Alnwick-Haldimand and Peterborough, and looked into the potential impacts on the groundwater, landscape and ecological values of the moraine. Industrial wind towers, solar fields and a massive Hydro One transformer station are the main infrastructure concerns at this time for communities to the east. Other groups, primarily in the west and central parts of the moraine, are worried about increasing pressure for road expansions connecting the 400 series highways.

STORM and its member groups have spent decades dealing with growth associated with water and sewer pipes, highways, and a high pressure gas line for the peaker power plant in the Holland Marsh.

The open protected green space of the moraine is the location of least resistance and lowest land value so it appeals to the government and businesses as the most cost effective location for infrastructure projects, commented Fred Jessop of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT). The 407 corridor was the first 'greenbelt' around Toronto and look what it has become.

The Eastern regional groups have developed a list of recommendations for the Province:

- Support the designation of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt area as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.
- Declare a moratorium on all large scale energy infrastructure projects on the Oak Ridges Moraine.
- Strengthen the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act to ensure that the ORM is protected from industrial infrastructure.
- Strengthen enforcement of current provincial laws.
- Increase public awareness of the ecological goods and services provided by the ORM.
- Educate the public of the health benefits provided by the ORM.
- Acknowledge the shared responsibilities of the Ministries, Conservation Authorities and the public.
- Recognize the integration and inter-connectivity of the entire ORM region.
- Examine the cumulative impact of all proposed infrastructure projects on the moraine.
- Protect the water.

The government's vision for the moraine is that of a continuous band of green rolling hills that provides form and structure to south-central Ontario, while protecting the ecological and hydrological features and functions that support the health and well-being of the region's residents and ecosystems.

At the same time STORM supports the production of environmentally sustainable energy that reduces reliance on fossil fuels, it also recognizes that all forms of power generation entail environmental trade-offs, and there are drawbacks to alternatives, including wind farms being sited on the moraine.

STORM shares the above-mentioned vision, and has been listening to citizens on the moraine regarding the siting of large-scale energy infrastructure projects.