

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and You

On November 21, the Town of Caledon hosted a community information meeting about the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*. Presentations were made by Todd Salter, Senior Policy Planner for the Town of Caledon, and Victor Doyle of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Following the presentation, many questions were asked, most pertaining to the specific concerns of individual landowners. Repeatedly people complained that the ORM Conservation Plan restrictions left them unable to do things to their property that they had planned to do. They all seemed to be saying that their individual interests were more important than the benefit of protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine for ALL of us. This was disappointing to hear but perhaps it is an inevitable part of the process. There will always be glitches in the implementation of such a complex plan and it is natural for people directly affected to complain about perceived wrongs whether or not they are justified.

The Caledon Countryside Alliance (CCA) recognizes the importance of maintaining such an integral part of our countryside. We hope that people will recognize the benefits of strengthening this legislation (e.g. aggregate extraction issues, control of individual growth), not weakening it. Please take the time to look over the following information, or a copy of the Plan, and support the continued efforts to protect the Moraine.

For those of you who could not attend the meeting, we have provided some information on the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* below. Both the Region of Peel and the Town of Caledon will be preparing draft Official Plan amendments in the new year, bringing both the Region and Town in line with the requirements of the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*. Upcoming meeting information will be available at www.town.caledon.on.ca and www.region.peel.on.ca. For inquiries about the local conformity exercise, site specific questions, or general information, or to register your support, please contact Todd Salter at 905-584-2272 ex2122, or at tsalter@Town.Caledon.on.ca.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan: An Overview

The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of Ontario's most significant landforms and stretches 160 km from the Trent River in the east to the Niagara Escarpment in the west. Caledon is where the Oak Ridges Moraine meets the Niagara Escarpment. The three municipalities in Headwaters Country (Caledon, Dufferin and Erin) are unique in being home to both these magnificent land features.

Under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, the Oak Ridges Conservation Plan was developed by the government (in consultation with the public and stakeholders) to provide land use and resource management direction for the 190,000 hectares of land and water within the Moraine.

The Moraine has a unique concentration of environmental, geological and hydrological features that make its ecosystem vital to south-central Ontario, including:

- Clean and abundant water resources;
- Healthy and diverse plant and animal habitat;
- An attractive and distinct landscape;
- Prime agricultural areas; and
- Sand and gravel resources close to market.

The ecologically-based Oak Ridges Conservation Plan divides the Moraine into four land use designations:

1. Natural Core Areas (38% of the Moraine)

Protect lands with the greatest concentrations of key natural heritage features critical to maintaining the integrity of the Moraine as a whole. Only existing uses and very restricted new uses are allowed.

2. Natural Linkage Areas (24% of the Moraine)

Protect critical natural and open space linkages. The only uses that are allowed are those allowed in Natural Core areas plus some aggregate resource operations.

3. Countryside Areas (30% of the Moraine)

Provide an agricultural and rural transition and buffer. Prime agricultural areas as well as natural features are protected.

4. Settlement Areas (8% of the Moraine)

Reflect a range of existing communities planned by municipalities to reflect community needs and values. Urban areas and development as set out in municipal official plans are allowed.

By constraining development to be consistent with those land uses and keeping the boundaries in place we can preserve the natural beauty and vital ecological functions of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Our concern is that any relaxation of the rules, thereby permitting development or resource extraction to creep into the natural areas, will erode away this wonderful part of our countryside. It is important therefore to support the efforts of organizations such as Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) in its efforts to preserve the natural values of the Moraine. The CCA is committed to providing that support. As individuals you can contact your local councillors and/or town planners and express your support of the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*.