

# Friends of the Spit

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Inside:  
- Thank you to a  
key member  
- Citizens for a  
Lakeshore Greenway  
(CFLAG) dissolves  
- Embayment D

## A Walk on the Spit

Here is a good opportunity to walk off some of the Christmas turkey while enjoying the Spit in winter, with a very knowledgeable guide.

The walk is organized by the Toronto Field Naturalists. It will be led by Boris Mather and is free.

Date: Saturday, December 27

Time: 10 am

Duration: approximately 2 hours

Meet: Southwest corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street (accessible by 501 streetcar).

Dress warmly and bring a snack and a hot drink

# NEWSLETTER

Fall-Winter 2003

## AS AN EDITORIAL

Toronto voters have elected a new mayor and council with a clear mandate to govern with openness and intelligence.

Now that the spectre of a damaging Island airport expansion has been eliminated, the many groups and individuals (including our organization) who have toiled for years to improve the quality of life in our city are looking at the future with renewed optimism.

It now seems possible that the magnificent waterfront we imagined and participated in planning will really happen. A waterfront that is clean, green, accessible, and will fulfil a wide variety of needs... from the splendid serenity of the Spit to the delightful dynamism of downtown.

A strictly non-partisan advocacy group, Friends of the Spit has built a very enviable record of successes working with individuals across the whole political spectrum. We are looking forward to a productive cooperation with the new Toronto City Council.

To the best of our abilities, we will continue to assist elected officials and city staff to make our city great. These will be very interesting times!

**"It is a time of energy, hope and excitement for the City of Toronto"**

*Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, at the swearing-in of the mayor and council*

Key Steering Committee member "retirement" a big loss for Friends

## Thank you, Verna

*Professor Verna Higgins, a founding member of Friends of the Spit and long-serving member of its Steering Committee, has recently retired from the University of Toronto Department of Botany and moved 'back home' to beautiful Nova Scotia.*

Verna has steadfastly and tirelessly promoted the cause of the Spit as a Public Urban Wilderness. Equally effective as a scientist, advocate and public speaker, she has made an immense contribution to our organization and to the advancement of knowledge about the Spit. Many of our successes are due to her efforts.

Those who had the privilege of working with her were impressed by her intellect, her common sense, her team spirit, her energy, and her dedication. Her enthusiasm and keen sense of humour also made working with her a pleasure.

Among her many achievements associated with the Spit, is the complete inventory of the various species of plants that can be found on the peninsula. The results of the survey were published in *Plant Communities of the Leslie Street Spit - A Beginner's Guide*, which was widely distributed and is still available.

However, our loss will be a gain for the environment in Nova Scotia. Verna told us that she is looking forward to working with local conservation groups, as well as tending the lovely garden she has been planting in her hometown.

We wish her a very happy, stimulating, and productive "retirement".

To express our gratitude, Verna was made a Life Member of Friends of the Spit.



An accomplished birder, Verna liked to go to the Spit early in the morning.

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## 2003 membership

There was excellent response to the notice of renewal for 2003 in the last issue. Your ongoing support is great!

If you have not yet renewed for 2003, a renewal slip is enclosed.

Since we are nearly into the new year, you may want to renew for both 2003 and 2004, and be done for another year. It's easy... just tick the box on the yellow sticker and enclose the amount you would send for two years.

**Thank You in advance**

*"We imagined a waterfront park from Port Hope to Burlington Bay"*

## CFLAG dissolves after 13 years of advocacy

*Citizens for a Lakeshore Greenway (CFLAG) is the group that put together the concept of the creation of a Lake Ontario Greenway, to ensure continuous public access to the shores of Lake Ontario.*

CFLAG was formed in 1991, following the hearings of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront ("Crombie Commission"), where a number of deputants advocated for the creation of a trail linking Lake Ontario waterfront communities.

Initially to be funded by the Royal Commission, CFLAG lost its financial support when the Commission became the Waterfront Regeneration Trust. In 1993, with provincial subsidies eliminated, the Trust accepted big corporate sponsors, and its role changed dramatically.

But CFLAG kept soldiering on despite the loss of funding. CFLAG has chalked up a remarkable number of achievements, either singly or in cooperation with other groups. These include the Humber River Pedestrian Bridge and the preservation of the Lakeshore Hospital Grounds. It was also a key champion of the Spit, defending it "from many strange developments such as a golf driving range and a wind turbine in this urban migratory area" (excerpt from CFLAG flyer).

CFLAG was dissolved on July 31, 2003.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to CFLAG for 13 years of unflinching, and eloquent, support of the Spit as a Public Urban Wilderness.

**"Our concept of a Greenway was not a 10 foot strip of asphalt. We ask you all to continue to lobby for habitat restoration and green space along the shore of Lake Ontario"**

*Excerpt from CFLAG's farewell flyer*

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## Help Wanted

In addition to advocacy on our members behalf, Friends of the Spit Steering Committee provides advice and expertise to other organizations, including The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, on matters pertaining to the Spit.

With the departure of Professor Verna Higgins (see over), the Steering Committee is seeking an individual with expertise in botany. This is a key role in view of the importance of the Spit's flora.

Maybe you are a graduate in one of the plant-related disciplines, or a self-taught expert in these areas. You have been a member for some time, have a few hours to spare, and want to contribute to the work of Friends of the Spit.

**Salary:** zilch, nada, \$0... but the satisfaction of helping the Spit, and you meet interesting people

**Time commitment:** Will vary from very light to a few intense periods

If you are interested, do not hesitate to contact us, by phone, e-mail or letter. We welcome your involvement.

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**A perfect gift that lasts a lifetime**

## The Spit Kit

**A present that will delight all year - and help Friends of the Spit extend their membership. Give a Spit Kit to the favourite people on your list.**

The Spit Kit is \$20, and includes

- \* 1-year membership
- \* A beautiful Spit poster
- \* Spit bird checklist
- \* Illustrated Spit plant book

To order, include recipient's name, address, phone number and e-mail, and any special message for the card, as well as your name and phone number. Mail to the address on the reverse with your cheque. To ensure delivery for Christmas, orders must be received before December 17. You can also order by phone or e-mail and mail the cheque. The Spit Kit will be gift-wrapped at your request.

**To renew membership for Spit Kits given in prior years, send \$10 with recipient's name and address. A seasonal card announcing your gift will be mailed.**

*About and around the Spit...*

## Updates and news

### VIEWING PLATFORM FOR EMBAYMENT D

The Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee (TTPAC), to which Friends of the Spit belong, reviewed the design for a platform at Embayment D proposed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). The committee found that the design was generally good and, in its opinion, suitable for the location. The committee requested the use of material that is representative of the Spit (e.g. stones) rather than lumber. Construction has started, and the platform should be ready by spring.

Embayment D is the closest location from the base of the Spit which offers a great view of the city. As such, it attracts a large number of people. Since many of these are "one-time visitors", who generally do not go further out on the Spit, the design includes some interactive features suitable for the general public.

### SIGNAGE AT THE SPIT

The TTPAC also discussed proposed interpretive and directional signage.

While the committee agreed with the material used (stone) and embedding signs in the ground (rather than putting them on posts), we cautioned about having too many signs.

The committee advised that minimal signage is essential to preserve the "wilderness" ambience of the Spit, particularly past Embayment D. Since a large number of people are frequent visitors, little is achieved by a lot of signs. People like the feeling of discovery, and not to always 'be told'.

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## "Welcome Wagon"

*Recently, one of our members called to request a Spit Kit. Asked whether it was a gift, she answered: "Yes. This is a 'welcome to the neighbourhood' present for a 12-year old boy whose family has just moved in. If you live here, you have to go to the Spit."*

So, a heartfelt welcome to the Spit and to Friends of the Spit, young Jake. We wish you a great time exploring.

But that is not the end of the story. The same member called twice more, to get Spit Kits for other new neighbours, who we also cheerfully welcome to Friends.

And congratulations to the donor for her exquisite taste in selecting gifts... and for her love of the Spit.