

# Friends of the Spit

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## NEWSLETTER

July, 1988

### TORONTO CITY COUNCIL PASSES ZONING BY-LAWS

**Despite representations from many environmental and citizen groups, the zoning permits marinas on the Spit.**

On May 18, the Land Use Committee of the City of Toronto held a public meeting to consider a Central Waterfront Official Plan amendment and zoning by-laws covering, among others, the Spit and the lands on the North Shore of the Outer Harbour (see previous newsletter).

Friends of the Spit and many other organizations such as the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations (CORRA), Toronto Field Naturalists, the Botany Conservation Group, Sierra Club and individuals, including Beaches - Woodbine MPP Marion Bryden, read deputations or sent written submissions in favour of zoning the entire Spit to permit only low-intensity recreation.

#### **Parkland zoning**

Three park/open space zoning designations were proposed for the Spit and the lands south of Unwin Avenue between Cherry Beach and Leslie Street:

- "G" for Cherry Beach (allows a wide range of active recreation uses).

- "Gm" for the area on the North Shore where sailing clubs are presently located and for the western part of the Spit to the second embayment (allows marinas and other intensive recreation).

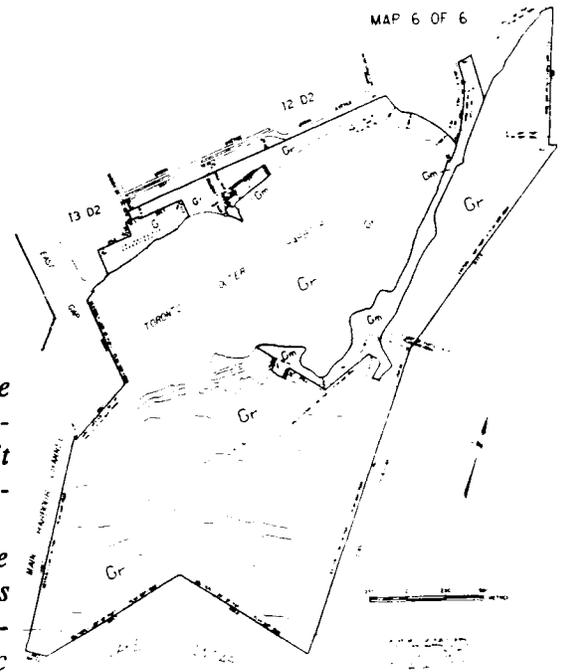
- "Gr" for the rest of the Spit and the waterlots in the Outer Harbour. This is a new designation to protect conservation lands (lands acquired by a public body for preserving in their natural state).

#### **Widespread concerns about marina zoning on the Spit**

The consensus among the groups and individuals who commented on the proposed zoning (the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Toronto Harbour Commission, the Ontario Sailing Association and the Outer Harbour Sailing Federation excepted, of course) can be summarized as follows:

o **Enthusiastic support for the "Gr" designation (which, for instance, could prevent the Harbour Commission from building its huge marina by the Spit — opposed by both Spit users and small-craft sailors.**

o **Widespread concerns about zoning part of the Spit for marinas and other intensive recreation. Deputants questioned the rationale for boating uses on the Spit since the City plan provides for them on the North Shore, at the present site occupied by the sailing clubs. According to the Canadian Wildlife Service, sailing facilities are not compatible with wilderness areas.**



o The need to ban private vehicle traffic on the entire Spit. There was a general feeling that a policy calling for "regulating" car traffic should be strengthened to make it clear that cars are prohibited.

o Questioning why the City zoning should recognize the MTRCA's Master Plan for the Spit. The Plan's major premise was to accommodate the North Shore sailing clubs on the Spit because they would not be allowed to remain on the North Shore. Marina zoning on the North Shore has relieved that pressure.

#### **City Council adopts zoning...with changes**

The Land Use Committee asked the Planning Department to report on the concerns expressed by deputants and to have the necessary by-laws prepared for City Council approval at its June 13 meeting.

In a report, dated June 10, the Planning Department wrote the following in response to the above concerns:

"Several deputants recommended that the Gm zoning be replaced with a Gr zoning in order to recognize the unique qualities of (the Spit) as a

natural resource area and to eliminate any potential for boating and other water-based recreational uses. We believe boating uses could be established in parts of the Spit designated Gm without destroying its integrity as an important Environmental Resource Area. The major issue is car access, and the proposed Official Plan policy which recognizes the need for regulation of private vehicular traffic should be respected in the establishment of any specific boating uses." (Friends of the Spit is extremely disappointed by these statements and wonders what are the planning grounds for sailing facilities on both the North Shore and the Spit.)

"The MTRCA noted that the proposed club house and parking areas of the Aquatic Park Sailing Club...proposed to be retained as permitted boating use, has not been zoned Gm. Following receipt of more accurate drawings (from the M T R C A ) ....a m i n o r change...consistent with the intention to zone the Aquatic Park Club as Gm...has been made. It is not intended that the Gm designation extend into embayment C." (Friends of the Spit seriously questions the rationale for adding yet another marina area to a zoning plan that provides for a more than sixfold increase in the amount of shoreline where boating facilities can be established. This is not a "minor" change.)

"...it has been suggested that Embayment D, which is proposed to be zoned Gm, may be classified as an Environmentally Significant Area, and some deputants noted its importance as a habitat area. We have asked the MTRCA to provide more information about this issue and if there is sufficient data establishing any part of this area as an ESA, we will report back to the Land Use Committee after the draft by-laws

are enacted." (Friends of the Spit surmises that the MTRCA will submit the recent report from the Canadian Wildlife Service, which, this June, counted more than 100 nesting pairs of Common Terns on the islands off Embayment D (Bloekpoel Islands). This ESA, designated by the MTRCA, is within the area to be lakefilled for boating facilities and parking lots!)

"In general, we believe that the proposed allocation of Gr and Gm zoning designations has struck a reasonable balance between boating and environmental concerns. The MTRCA plan for the Spit is proceeding through as Environmental Assessment. As this process nears completion, it may be appropriate to reconsider the proposed boundaries between Gr and Gm areas..." (Friends of the Spit believes that a "reasonable balance" had been struck by zoning part of the North Shore Gm. Indeed, we would have supported a modest increase of the Gm zone there. Why jeopardize the future of the Spit when there is an alternative.)

### **Another opportunity lost**

We deplore that the city lost a unique opportunity to show leadership in protecting an irreplaceable environmental resource and, once again, failed to acknowledge the wishes of the vast majority of citizens, who want the entire Spit preserved as an environmental and low-intensity recreation site for the present and future generations.

### **Some positive steps**

The Official Plan now contains a number of provisions that can do much to protect the environment, preserve parkland and prevent exploitative uses on the part of the water's edge located between Cherry Beach and Leslie Street. These cover, among others, lake-filling — which requires an Official Plan Amendment that has to go through public process. For instance, the

MTRCA will have to apply for such amendment to proceed with the lake-filling it plans to do on the Spit.

Likewise, since the waterlots in the Outer Harbour are zoned Gr, the Toronto Harbour Commission will have to be granted an Official Plan amendment before it is allowed to proceed with the construction of marina facilities there.

Another important provision of the Official Plan are statements that the City will "discourage the sale or lease of water's edge lands now owned by any government, Crown corporation, public board, agency or commission, including the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, to private interests, and seek the conveyance or long term lease to the City of water's edge lands for parks purposes..."

### **However...**

We must be extremely vigilant to ensure that the Gr zoning at the THC marina and the MTRCA lakefill proposed on the Spit are not merely temporary designations pending negotiations with these two developers.

## **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY AT THE SPIT A HUGE SUCCESS**

**Hundreds of first-time visitors enjoyed wild-nature in the city and learned about the Spit's unique flora and fauna.**

Mother Nature provided bright sunshine for our Viewing Day at the Spit on Sunday June 5. Despite high winds and a huge array of public events throughout the city, the people came.

Families, seniors, young adults. Mothers and fathers followed gosling like by their small children on tricycles. Parents pushing strollers. Lovers hand in hand. They arrived at the gate looking a little hesitant, they left wrapped in the

famous "Spit smile" that says "I came and I liked it. I'll come back".

### No let up at viewing stations

For this special event, six viewing stations were set up along the Spit, staffed by naturalists from Friends of the Spit, the Botany Conservation Group and Toronto Field Naturalists. It was a long and very rewarding day for these volunteers. They all reported full house at their station and a very high degree of interest from the public.

Bouquets to all of them for their cheerful cooperation, on our behalf and on behalf of the hundred of members of the public they helped understand and appreciate the beauty of the Spit.

### Canadian Wildlife Service on the site

The day was made even more special by the presence of two distinguished scientists from the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada, Drs. Hans Bloekpoel and Gaston Tessier. The former set up his equipment facing "Bloekpoel" Island (Embayment D), where he shared his extensive knowledge of the Spit's fauna and flora with the crowds.

The terns must have sensed Dr. Bloekpoel was coming. On that day he counted more than 100 pairs of Common Terns dutifully nesting on the island.

Dr. Tessier staffed the station by the gull colonies in Embayment A. Although it was the furthest viewing point along the Spit, there was an uninterrupted flow of people wanting to know about the different kinds of gulls and other wildlife on the Spit.

### Politicians enjoy nature

Several local politicians responded to our invitation to spend a quiet hour on the Spit. They were taken on a special tour by Dr. Higgins of the Botany Conservation Group. Among the elected officials attending the event were David Reville, MPP Riverdale, and Lynn McDonald, MP Broadview-Greenwood (the Spit is now in their riding),

Charles Caccia, MP Davenport and federal environment critic, and Marion Bryden, MPP Beaches-Woodbine, who is a very strong supporter of the "Let It Be" option.

### Media coverage extensive

The event was well covered by CITY-TV and CBLT (CBC). The CITY-TV reporter, who took the bus with all his equipment, produced a particularly sensitive report of the event for the 6 o'clock news.

# Come, explore The Spit

On Toronto's waterfront, there is a park with a difference - a five-kilometre peninsula that is home to hundreds of types of plants and birds, many of them rare.

WALK, CYCLE OR TTC

SELF GUIDED TOUR

**WELCOME TO THE SPIT**  
This brochure was prepared to introduce you to some of the plants and wildlife on the Spit. We hope it will help you appreciate the unique environmental features and atmosphere of this "wilderness" in the city.

**Friends of the Spit**

THIS BROCHURE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM ENVIRONMENT CANADA.

*Hundreds of copies of this brochure were handed out at the Spit on World Environment Day,*

### Grant from Environment Canada

The event was made possible by a grant from Environment Canada. We produced a large poster that was distributed to schools, community centres, etc. and put up throughout the city in shops, drugstores, pubs and other public places by a large number of volunteers.

A brochure with a map of the Spit and information on some of the wildlife was also produced. And it was a "best-

seller". More than 800 copies were handed out on June 5. Groups requested them, including the Bruce Trail for their walk on the Spit on June 19. (If you would like a copy of the brochure or a supply for your group, drop us a note or call 699-6442.)

### Many join Friends of the Spit

The success of the day was confirmed by the many new members joining Friends of the Spit. A heartfelt welcome to these new members. We are very pleased to have shared our love of the Spit with you and wish you many pleasant hours enjoying Nature in the City.

## A PARK IS A PARK IS A PARK.....

Or so you thought. MTRCA "Strategy for Public Use of Conservation Lands" includes money-making arrangements with developers. The Spit is one of five areas under consideration.

In June, Friends of the Spit and other groups attended a workshop at the MTRCA headquarters. The purpose of the meeting was to review the above strategy, which includes proposals to set up lease/privatization arrangements with developers in MTRCA conservation areas at Claireville, Boyd, Greenwood, Petticoat Creek...and the Spit.

### MTRCA cash poor, or so it says

The gist of the discussion seemed to be that the MTRCA needs more revenue and that these leases with developers, for private profit, would bring in money. We are horrified at this prospect of "Wonderlands" springing up on public parkland, acquired by the MTRCA with public money.

Has the MTRCA considered other ways of saving money? Such as, perhaps, not engaging so many consultants, purchasing land when the price is right



— e.g. the Brickworks — not four years later, at four times the price, or not spending \$6 million at the Spit solely for the benefit of a private interest group (sailing clubs).

### **Slap in the face**

The MTRCA is no longer a "Conservation" Authority — if it ever has been. Specifically, the idea of the Spit being targeted for arrangements with developers is absurd. It is a slap in the face to our organization, the many other groups and the thousands of citizens who have all fought to keep the Spit as it is, with free admission and accessible to all.

*"I can assure you that should any plans of the MTRCA proceed that involve any type of developer/lease/privatization project, we will fight you as far and as long as we positively can,"* we said in a letter sent to the MTRCA. Copies of the letter were widely distributed to politicians and other concerned parties.

(To obtain a copy of the MTRCA "Strategy for Public Use of Conservation Lands", dated December 4, 1988, and of brochures on the subject, dated June 1, 1988, phone the MTRCA at 661-6600.)

## **SAVE THE ROUGE A CITIZENS VICTORY**

**After a 13-year battle, Save the Rouge Valley System (SRVS) has scored a major victory. By a vote of 17-0 Scarborough City Council has adopted the Official Plan policies to protect Metro's "Last Green Door" from development.**

**Congratulations to SRVS and to the 46 Scarborough ratepayers associations, who tirelessly worked together to bring about this landmark victory.**

**The campaign is now switching to the province, which own**

**a large part of the Rouge Valley lands. This is shaping up as a major fight since the province has its own agenda to build housing in the Valley. SRVS can be contacted at 284-6409.**

## **LOON — NOT THE COIN BUT A NETWORK**

LOON — Lake Ontario Organizer Network — is a newly-created umbrella group working to bring together all the environmental organizations on both sides of the border concerned with Lake Ontario issues.

Friends of the Spit is a member of LOON, which is spearheaded by Great Lakes United.

LOON's major thrust is to draft a citizen's agenda for Lake Ontario.

To this end, LOON is holding a public meeting on Tuesday, July 26, 1988, at the Toronto Library, 40 Orchard View Blvd (1 block north of Eglinton and 1 block west of Yonge). The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. We encourage you to attend.

## **MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

**You will find enclosed your membership card for 1988, if you have renewed your support for the year.**

**If your support is still outstanding, a renewal slip is enclosed.**

**While we make every effort to keep accurate records, errors can occur. Should our information be incorrect, please contact us so that we can amend our records.**