

Friends of the Spit

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Toronto, Ontario M4E 3V7

Inside:
- Council adopts
Gr zoning
- Two close
calls

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IN A LIGHTER VEIN...

The shortest Friends of the Spit deputation ever!

Part of the rezoning process is discussion and recommendation by the Planning Advisory Committee — a Toronto Committee of citizen appointees and one City Councillor (John Adams in this instance). The committee sits in the evening.

It had been a very long evening, with many weighty items, when at 11:25 p.m. the Spit Gr rezoning was finally on the table.

— *Chairman:* "We have Friends of the Spit on the speakers list."

— *FOS person:* "Mr. Chairman, I realize it is very late. I am quite willing to spare the Committee from having to listen to me, if I can be assured you will recommend the rezoning".

— *A member:* "I move to recommend the rezoning".

— *Chairman:* "All in favour".

All hands went up, and very quickly!

NEWSLETTER

May 1997

AS AN EDITORIAL

The Spit must be the most studied piece of land in Toronto, and it seems on the way to becoming one of the most interfered with sites. Is this too much of a good thing?

While we agree that sensitive public education and some degree of rehabilitation and management (in areas so severely degraded that they would not mend on their own) are beneficial at the Spit, we have some concern with the amount of engineering and earth-moving work that is being performed. These projects are consistent with the "letter" of the approved environmental assessment document, but could they be straying from its intent?

There are indications that many Friends and members of the general public would rather see less than more intervention and interpretation at the Spit. The main attractiveness of the Spit for a good number (if not most) seems to be that it is "rough and ready" — a place to be explored and savoured on one's own.

Among parks, the Spit is unique in that respect. We think there is a very good case for remaining extremely vigilant, lest it becomes yet another victim of the "showplace syndrome".

Great news for the Spit baselands!

COUNCIL ADOPTS Gr REZONING

At its meeting of April 14, Toronto City Council adopted the Land Use Committee recommendation of March 27 to rezone to Gr (conservation lands) the 12-acre parcel of Spit baseland between Leslie St. and the Hearn bridge.

As you remember, just about a year ago this site was saved from being made into a golf driving range thanks to your vigorous protests and those of a large number of other groups and unaffiliated residents. It was then that the motion was made for the rezoning to Gr, in order to protect the land from further attempts to establish incompatible uses in the area.

Approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs for Ontario, which may take up to 90 days, is the next step. The process should then be complete by mid-summer, assuming there are no requests for referral to the Ontario Municipal Board (which hears appeals regarding land use issues).

Heartfelt thanks to all who wrote letters, spoke at meetings and lobbied City Councillors. **You were great!**

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CLOSE CALL #1: Powerboat races by the Spit

PROMOTER WITHDRAWS APPLICATION

Dare we hope that "The issue that never seems to go away" (in March Newsletter) has been put to rest finally?

On March 27 (ironically the same day it approved Gr rezoning for the base of the Spit), the Land Use Committee was to discuss the holding of "Formula One Power Boat Grand Prix" races by the Spit, to which we and other groups objected strongly. Frankly, we were not very optimistic about that vote.

Well, on March 26 we were informed that the promoter was withdrawing his application for that location. Therefore, the item was struck from the agenda of the Committee. Once in a while, there are tender mercies!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: *Thanks to the large number of Friends who have already renewed their support for 1997.*

If you have not yet renewed according to our records, a separate renewal slip with your label is enclosed. We would greatly appreciate your continued support. Members who have renewed for 1997 will see "REN/97" on their label.

CLOSE CALL #2: *Port authority might have endangered the Spit* **FEDERAL LAND GRAB AVERTED**

In a unilateral move that caught everyone unaware, MP Dennis Mills (Broadview-Greenwood) added the port of Toronto and all the portlands (in which the Spit is located) to the list of locations that would have been governed by a Federal Port Authority.

This body, with a majority of federal representatives, would have replaced the Toronto Harbour Commission (on the board of which the City of Toronto holds a majority) and the Toronto Economic Development Committee (TEDCO) — where the City is also represented and which owns the portlands.

This move could have had negative consequences for the Spit. Firstly, the intent was for the Federal government to acquire a large amount of land that it could then sell to developers. The potential for unstoppable projects that would be detrimental to the Spit is quite frightening.

Secondly, what support would Friends of the Spit expect against damaging schemes when the MP for the area is the very person who put forward the plan (the Spit is in the Federal riding of Broadview-Greenwood). We also deplore that Mr. Mills added the Port of Toronto at the eleventh hour, without any public consultation.

Fortunately for us, we think, the item died on the order paper due to the election call.

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An interesting evening in April

MTRCA CONSERVATION SEMINAR

On Wednesday, April 9, the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority held an open house to inform the public about wildlife at the Spit and the status of projects undertaken under the Environmental Assessment document.

While the audience was fairly small, enthusiasm made up for the numbers. The meeting room at the Ralph Thornton Centre held informative displays and photographs reporting on the state of projects.

A lively slide show, given by Scott Jarvie of the MTRCA, told us more about the state of the Spit. There was also discussion of some upcoming challenges, such as the beavers felling a large number of trees.

One completed project you may wish to visit is the aquatic near-shore habitat created in Embayment B (the other side of the swing bridge, take the first "road" to your right, and walk about 200 meters).

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Point to ponder

WHO WILL OUR SUPPORTERS BE IN THE FUTURE?

"Mega City" is changing the political map. Already, we know that many environmentally enlightened councillors (Toronto and Metro) will be leaving the municipal arena.

Among those to be missed is Jack Layton, who is running federally in Broadview-Greenwood. Jack has always been a staunch supporter of Friends of the Spit as a City then as a Metro Councillor and as a member of the MTRCA Board.

While in the past we felt less impact from the federal level, recent events (including the Port Authority issue) prompt us to think that we now need friends in Ottawa.

Note that Friends of the Spit does not endorse or support any party or political candidate. However, we will continue to report on politicians' actions that have an impact on the Spit.

Out on the Spit

With the arrival of warmer weather, many a Friends thoughts turn to the Spit. Here are a couple of tips to make your visit all the more enjoyable.

- The sun has a lot of punch and shade is practically non-existent on the Spit. Therefore, a hat and sunscreen with a high SPF are very important, particularly for young children.
- With heat and exercise, it is easy to become dehydrated. Bring plenty of water with you and drink before you get thirsty.

HAVE A GREAT TIME!

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Planting opportunities

Want to get a little physical? Come to the Spit to plant aquatic vegetation.

The MTRCA will be holding aquatic vegetation plantings at the Spit Wednesday, June 18 and Saturday June 21.

For details, call the MTRCA at 661-6600

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*Great present for all occasions...
or for yourself!*

The Spit Kit

The Spit Kit includes:

- ☼ 1 year membership in Friends of the Spit
- ☼ Plant Communities of the Leslie Street Spit (our plant book)
- ☼ Come, explore (brief intro with map)

- ☼ Bird checklist
- ☼ Spit poster (mailed in a tube)*
- ☼ A seasonal card

To order: send \$17 (individual) or \$20 (household/group : 2 or more at the same address) to:

Friends of the Spit ,
P.O. Box 51518,

2060 Queen St. East, Toronto, ON M4E 3V7

Include: name, address and phone number of the recipient and your name and phone number. Allow 3 weeks for delivery.

The plant book is also available separately for \$6.00 including postage and handling

* Posters are free (\$5.00 covers the tube and postage). You can get them at the Spit from the MTRCA (who produced them). Kits without poster are \$12 (individual)/\$15 (household).

