

# Friends of the Spit

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Inside:  
- Parkland in the  
Portlands  
- Who enabled the  
wind turbine at the  
Ex? (you will be  
surprised!)

## 2003 membership support renewal

The enclosed renewal slip is the first membership reminder for 2003.

Thank you to the many members who have renewed already, and to those who called or e-mailed to enquire whether they were paid-up for 2003. With such devoted (and well-organized!) members, it is no wonder Friends of the Spit have been so successful for a quarter century.

...and Thank You

# NEWSLETTER

Spring-Summer 2003

## AS AN EDITORIAL

You have not been exactly spoiled with newsletters from Friends of the Spit. But that definitely does not mean that your Steering Committee has been swinging the lead.

The dominant issue has remained that of parkland and land use around the Spit.

As you will see in the article on the right, Friends' vigilance and dedication and that of others, including the north shore community sailing clubs, have prompted City Council to approve the Secondary Plan that provides for a relatively large area of parkland and open space in the Portlands.

However, this is just the first phase in the struggle to ensure that Toronto keeps a large area of open space and parkland in the eastern Portlands... and to ensure that the park uses are in tune with the needs of a large segment of the population for informal, naturalized, and quiet areas to enjoy 'self-propelled', individual and family recreation.

Already, "ideas" for "developing" this parcel of land abound, ranging from casinos to arenas, and the now proverbial 'vibrant Parisian outdoor cafés'.

What happens to the parkland adjacent to the Spit will have a tremendous impact on the Spit itself. Since "unlocking the Portlands" will happen over 30 years, it is crucial that we prepare the next generation of Friends of the Spit.

And we better do it well, the coming generations of Friends of the Spit will have a full plate!

## Secondary Plan for the Central Waterfront approved by City Council

# We gave Toronto a park...

*In its own way, the finalization of the Plan covering the area between Cherry and Leslie Streets was a saga worthy of a suspense novel. Parkland boundaries kept shifting, Unwin Avenue kept moving north, then south, then in between, then south again. Another street parallel to Unwin sprang up, then disappeared. 'Water routes' appeared, including a cut through the Spit. The cut was vigorously opposed by Friends of the Spit and by the north shore community sailing clubs. It was deleted... replaced by a "canoe portage".*

When all was said and done, we think that the Plan as adopted by City Council is a good one. You will notice on the map that the Baselands are identified as "natural area" (as is the Spit), that there is a sizeable wildlife corridor along the Don River (crucial for wildlife mobility) and that east of the corridor the area designated "parks" extends north from the lake to a point in line with the Baselands.

We still believe that all the lands between the ship channel and the lake, from Cherry Street to the Baselands, should be protected as parkland. As we said again and again, once development is allowed, parkland is gone, and there is no turning back.

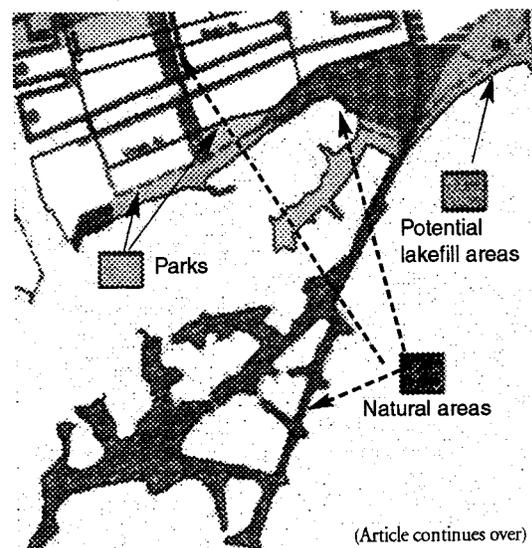
This plan is the culmination of several years of work by individuals and groups, who contributed their input and expertise. As well, the City of Toronto Planning Department should be commended for their willingness to listen and to make changes.

Following, you will find the major part of Friends of the Spit's deputation at the last public meetings before Council's vote on the Plan.

*" Our 1200 member organization has participated since 1977 in all issues to do with the Waterfront and The Spit. Because of our actions and constant vigilance, the Spit has remained as a car-free Public Urban Wilderness.*

*[...] We noted, as did the Commissioner, the overwhelming demand and desire for parkland and greenspace in the Portlands.*

*What started out clearly articulated has now become fuzzy. It's simple - the debate is simple - it's about how much parkland and greenspace will be retained for our citizens for the future versus how much will be used for development. Each acre developed will never be parkland. An equitable equation must be reached.*



(Article continues over)

We gave Toronto a park... (continued from first page)

*Our dream is worth re-stating – in terms of this Report: some years from now, as you ride the streetcar east along the new 40 m wide easement of Unwin Avenue, as you pass condominiums after walkups on your left and right, catching only brief glimpses of Lake Ontario, you'll pass the Hearn relic, and then presto! – you'll cross the circulating channel and you'll be in a park – greenspace north to the Ship Channel, and the Public Urban Wilderness of the Baselands and the Spit to the South. Suddenly, you'll be aware of the Lake and of Nature.*

*That was our vision – A Spit Park bounded by the circulating channel, the Ship Channel, and Leslie Street - only crossed by Unwin- and that dream was as valid a dream as that of any Design Charette participant.*

*However, reality enters.... After all these years, the Spit needs defined boundaries. We now accept and support the alignment for Unwin, and are pleased that all land south is shown as Natural Areas. We ask this committee to affirm that, and forever prohibit non-park uses south of Unwin Avenue. Finally, once you've endorsed the boundaries of the Spit, we ask that this committee, today, amend the Consolidated Report to delete the cut shown in the Spit isthmus.*

*The idea was first broached, and rejected in the 80's, and is not part of the provincially accepted Environmental Assessment. Other reasons to reject this cut are the damage it will do to the Spit physically, to its ambiance, to the terrestrial wildlife; let alone the enormous coastal engineering and bridge costs; let alone the ease with which jet skis would now access the Outer Harbour and the Spit Lagoon; let alone that this suggestion was only revealed March 13th, and has not yet received any scrutiny by the public.*

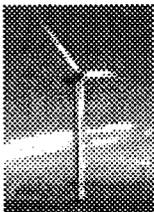
*So, in conclusion, councillors, first; support the plan before you, and secondly make 2 motions: (1) guarantee the Spit its boundaries, its Natural Area, and its freedom from the spectre of development, and (2) reject the proposed cut for the isthmus of the Spit."*

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*Everybody seems to be bragging that they made it happen. Here is the truth.*

## **... and we gave the Ex a wind turbine!**

*Our opposition to a wind turbine at the Spit was misconstrued by many people for political gain. The last straws were an article by Gord Perks in the June 26 issue of "Eye", and uninformed remarks by Jack Layton\* during the blackout. Now it is time to set the record straight.*



When the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative (TREC) proposed wind turbines at the base of the Leslie Street Spit, and at Colonel Sam Smith Park (in the west end), these locations were opposed. At the Leslie Street Spit, the opposition was led by our organization and at Colonel Sam Smith Park, by Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront (CCFEW).

In both cases, the opposition was based on the fact that public parks and green space are not appropriate locations for wind turbines. Over and over it was stated that one green success (i.e. parkland) should not be sacrificed for another green initiative (especially one billed as a "demonstration"). It took TREC a very long time to realize that they had "a good idea, wrong location".

Further to that, Friends of the Spit and CCFEW were the ones who postulated that the CNE site was a viable and highly visible location. We demonstrated to TREC that there were indeed areas at the CNE outside of airport height restrictions where it would be possible to erect a wind turbine, and we advocated on their behalf to the CNE Board and to the local councillor regarding this location. Initially proposed by CCFEW, the CNE location satisfies all the requirements for a highly visible demonstration wind turbine.

SO, THIS IS THE REAL STORY. THE SAD PART IS THAT IF TREC HAD EVALUATED SITES PROPERLY, THE CNE WIND TURBINE WOULD HAVE BEEN UP AND RUNNING SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WITHOUT FUSS AND WITHOUT CREATING EXPENSE AND ACRIMONY IN THE COMMUNITY.

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\*Jack Layton used the recent blackout to imply on national radio that we would have avoided all our electrical woes if wind turbines had been built on the waterfront. He expressed outrage that there had been opposition to the turbines, which caused much delay, without mentioning the reasons for the vigorous opposition.

As we all know wind turbines are connected to the electrical grid. And, it is the grid that failed. We expect more enlightenment from the leader of a national party and former vice-chair of Toronto Hydro.

*About and around the Spit...*

## **Updates and news**

### **CRAIG MATHER RETIRES AS TRCA CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

What started as a rocky relationship in the 80's, during the Master Plan process for the Spit, mellowed over the years, as Craig, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Friends of the Spit developed mutual respect and realized that they did see eye to eye on some issues.

It is a measure of the person that Craig held no grudge against us for all the trials and tribulations we gave him. Friends of the Spit were awarded the TRCA 1998 Honour Roll Award, and Craig composed the heartfelt citation that accompanied it.

We wish Craig a most happy retirement, pursuing his love for the great outdoors.

Brian Denney, who has held a number of positions at the TRCA, has been appointed as its new Chief Administrative Officer.

His appointment ensures a welcome continuity on matters of the Spit. We wish Brian much success in his new role.

### **Laura Jones now City Councillor for the Spit**

Laura Jones was appointed Councillor for Ward 30 Toronto-Danforth, the ward where the Spit is located. Councillor Jones fills the vacancy left by Jack Layton.

Congratulations to Councillor Jones. We worked with her on community issues and appreciated her dedication.

### **VIEWING PLATFORM FOR EMBAYMENT D**

The design of an "unobtrusive" viewing platform at Embayment D has started. This is the closest location from the base of the Spit which offers a spectacular view of the city.

As the Spit becomes ever more popular, there is a need to provide a safe and attractive area that will also help protect the vegetation from damage by crowd pressure (it was observed that some yahoos cut the vegetation to get a better view)

The TRCA is designing the platform, and the design will be reviewed by the Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee, to which Friends of the Spit belong. The TRCA is planning to build the platform in the fall.

### **NATURAL GAS POWER STATION AT THE HEARN**

A huge gas-fuelled generating station is proposed for the eastern part of the Hearn site.

We have participated in the EA. Our concerns include height (6 storey) and birds, noise, public access to the dockwall, temperature of the water effluent into the Outer Harbour, and air quality.