

Caledon Citizen

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Office Administrator: Cheryl Phillips
Email: admin@caledoncitizen.com

Telephones: 905-857-6626 or 905-857-5846
Fax: 905-857-6363

Website: www.caledoncitizen.com

Main Office: 25 Queen Street, North, Bolton L7E 1C1

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Publisher: Bruce R. Haire
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Editor: **Mark Pavilons** Email: editor@caledoncitizen.com
Staff Reporter: **Alan Liczyk** Email: alan@caledoncitizen.com

Trail building: a valuable exercise worth supporting

There was a time in our local history when trails were seen as a relic of the past, typically constructed by our native Indians.

More recently, we began to see them in a different light. North America's most famous hiking trail, the Appalachian Trail, is a continuous marked footpath that goes from Katahdin, Maine, about 80 kilometres west of the New Brunswick border, to Springer Mountain in Georgia, a distance of about 2,160 miles. Its origins have been traced by some Americans to an article in the October 1921 issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, titled *An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning*.

The trail that follows the Appalachian skyline must have been in the minds of at least some of those involved in creating the Bruce Trail four decades later.

It was back in 1960 that a visionary named Raymond Lowes envisioned a trail that would follow the Niagara Escarpment from Niagara Falls to Tobermory in a proposal to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

As "The Bruce" continues to be improved, other trails are springing up just about everywhere, the biggest single project being the Trans-Canada Trail, which ultimately will cross all 10 provinces.

In the last couple of decades, many of the trails opened in Ontario have been along abandoned rail lines. Examples in this part of the province are the Caledon Trailway between Palgrave and Terra Cotta and the Elora-Cataract trail, which follows a former CPR branch line and passes through Erin, Hillsburgh, Orton and Fergus and includes a delightful section around Belwood Lake and across the Shand Dam. Similarly, the Caledon Trailway follows the route of a CNR line that once ran between Hamilton and Allandale (now part of Barrie), and which today survives as part of a CN bypass and the full length of the South Simcoe Railway, the popular steam train between Tottenham and Beeton.

"Take a hike!" may once have been intended as an insult, but today it's more likely seen as an invitation to combine healthy exercise and adventure while communing with nature, be it on foot, on horseback or perhaps atop a mountain bike.

These days, the main issues to be

addressed involve access and cost.

Access is an issue that surfaces in more ways than one. Should limits be placed on the type of trail use? On the other hand, should trails generally be accessible to those with physical disabilities?

In terms of limits, some trails (such as those in Mono Cliffs Provincial Park) are off-limits to horseback riders. Most, if not all, prohibit motorized vehicles.

However, that sort of accessibility can come with a big price tag. For example, two bridges planned for an eastward extension of the Vicki Baron trail are expected to cost about \$400,000.

Similarly, the ideal trail might be seen as one that features a hard surface (usually asphalt). But while that would trim maintenance costs, it means a huge initial cost and the question then arises as to where the money will come from.

Sadly, we're in an era when just about every level of government has been placing less reliance on broadly based taxation and more on fees for service. But is the user pay system really appropriate when it comes to things like parks, roads and trails?

As for parks and trails, there does not seem to be any consensus as yet as to when, and to what extent, the user-pay concept should be employed.

On the one hand, some of Ontario's most impressive parks are free and hopefully always will be, a couple of examples being Toronto's High Park and the Toronto Islands.

On the other, our provincial parks and conservation areas now get most (if not all) their revenue from user fees. Incredibly, the day use fee in the provincial parks this year is \$11 per vehicle, and rental of a campsite for the night can cost you more than \$30.

Thus far, trails have been financed mainly through donations and we haven't yet heard anyone suggest toll trails.

However, if it's generally agreed that trails are good for us, is there really a good argument against them being financed by governments?

We think a good argument could and should be made for local governments becoming involved in the management of conservation areas that are close to urban centres.



Our Readers Write

Editorial was inaccurate

Your editorial *Is it really Places to Grow or just places to stagnate?* (May 30) contains a number of errors and strange leaps of logic. For starters, the Greenbelt Act (2004) did not freeze "development on what has become known as the Oak Ridges Moraine." The moraine is protected under legislation enacted in 2001 that established the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, which does not freeze, but limits growth to existing urban areas on the moraine. The Greenbelt Act recognizes both the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment Plans while further protecting additional lands from urban development.

Secondly, the Oak Ridges Moraine is hardly a man-made fancy that has recently "become known." It was formed more than 10,000 years ago during the last ice age and mapped in the 1920s. It is a geological and hydrological wonder that is the headwaters for more than 65 river and stream systems that flow south into Lake Ontario and north into Georgian Bay, Lakes Simcoe and Scugog and Rice Lake. Aside from the aesthetic beauty of its rolling hills, numerous rivers, small springs, wetlands, kettle lakes, forests and wildlife habitat, its protection is essential because it is the source of clean cold fresh water to hundreds of thousands of people who live on the moraine and beyond.

Your assertion that protection of the moraine "sacrificed some of the province's best remaining farmland rather than see any development in moraine areas where agriculture has been at best marginal" is disturbing. Just because land is not viable for agriculture does not mean that it is ripe for development. There are many factors that warrant an area's preservation. Further, protection of the moraine does not have to be at the expense of prime agricultural land. It is not an "either or" situation. Obviously, we must protect both through designating where and how growth can occur. Development should occur in places where the natural resources and

existing infrastructure can support it. Inter-basin transfers and long distance piping of water and sewerage are not acceptable, and are a recipe for both more sprawl, and environmental disaster.

The alarming rate at which prime agriculture land is being gobbled up by sprawl is testimony to the need for legislated restrictions. Growth and development must take place in concert; it cannot be left entirely to each town and city. It is up to the province to envision the big picture and provide the guidelines necessary to ensure the good health and vibrancy of every community in Ontario.

Debbe Crandall
Executive Director, STORM

Mark writes from the heart

I am still wiping the tears away from my face after reading the Father's Day column that Mark Pavilons wrote (*Missing some fatherly advice*, June 13). Each and every week (for the past 25 years since we moved to Bolton) my family has read his contributions to your newspaper. In fact, when our sons were away at university, I often saved his columns for them to read (now I PDF them). This column really hit me hard - it will be 30 years in October since my Dad passed and the wound is still fresh. You never truly recover from the death of your Dad. Mark put into print many of the feelings that I have had all these years. My biggest regret in life is that my Dad never met my husband (of 25 years+). I guess it just wasn't meant to be. Each time our children reach a milestone in their lives it just hurts that much more. Our younger son just graduated last week from McMaster and the wound has opened again and I am sad. Mark expresses many of the feelings that we all keep trapped within ourselves. Thanks for the *Caledon Citizen*!

Jennifer Tracey
Bolton

Caledon Citizen



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