

*Private Members' Business*

I think this motion is a very good starting point and I congratulate my friend for bringing it before Parliament today.

**Mr. René Soetens (Ontario):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to participate gladly in this particular motion brought by the member for York North. It is certainly a very appropriate motion as it relates to our geographic part of Canada, shall we say. I know that the Oak Ridges moraine runs through the member's riding, as it does through my riding. In my term on municipal council in Ajax, prior to my election as a member of Parliament, for eight years we had to deal with the lower reaches of the Oak Ridges moraine and now as the member of Parliament for the riding of Ontario the upper levels of my constituency include significant portions of the Oak Ridges moraine. Not only does it include significant portions, but some 30 streams and rivers take their sources of water from the moraine.

I can tell you that creeks like Duffins Creek, Petticoat Creek, Carruthers Creek and Millers Creek all emanate from my riding. The Rouge River is on the western boundary of my riding and is obviously impacted. I know there are several other smaller streams that also can very clearly prove and indicate that the source of their water ultimately emanates from the Oak Ridges moraine.

I do not need to go into the description as members have done of the over-all magnitude of the moraine and its benefit to the southern reaches of Ontario. I would like to spend a little bit of time on the impact and some of the things that we can do.

There is no doubt that the moraine is significant and of tremendous value, but its true value has yet to be established. Certainly we know it is an important groundwater resource for the greater Toronto area and it provides drinking water for many of the small municipalities outside of the city of Toronto as well. However, there is a very delicate balance that has to be maintained in the Oak Ridges moraine.

• (1150)

Its form is a distinctly higher elevated landscape to the north of Lake Ontario. I think Lakeridge Road is probably a classic example because it runs from the lake to the higher reaches of the ridge and that is how it got

its name. There are also other roads like the Brock Road and Wesley Road, but as you are driving north on these roads you can see that you are not only just driving north but you are driving uphill, you are driving to the upper reaches of the moraine.

Certainly the precipitation that falls in the upper reaches of the moraine seeps into the ground and eventually flows as ground-water south toward the lake and north for those areas affected in the Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe areas. If you affect that particular area in a detrimental fashion, then obviously it will have an effect on many areas' supply of drinking water.

The Ontario government, however, I think has the lead role in the protection of this groundwater. I appreciate that the member has brought this issue to the Parliament of Canada, but I do believe that in our constitutional set-up we have already provided that the province of Ontario in this instance should have the lead role in the protection of groundwater and the protection of wildlife and open spaces provided by the unique natural forms and features of the area north of Lake Ontario.

In order to perform this vital function, the province has enlisted the support of municipalities throughout the area, conservation authorities, public interest groups, developers and citizen advisory groups. In my riding the metro Toronto region conservation authority is certainly very active, as is the central Lake Ontario conservation authority toward the east end of my riding.

In order to manage this moraine, really what we need to do is make sure that there is minimal removal or degradation of natural areas and the maintenance of natural wildlife corridors. The federal government is prepared to co-operate with the Government of Ontario in areas which may require expertise that we can provide. This could include items such as scientific research to aid in the understanding of the physical, chemical and biological processes which influence the quantity and quality of groundwater and surface water in the region.