

*Private Members' Business*

Of special importance is the role that the moraine has in the source of a significant part of the streamflow in rivers feeding into the Toronto harbourfront, for instance, where it is the source and the headwaters of the Don, the Humber and the Rouge, but it is also the course and the headwater for rivers that extend north, such as the Holland River and the Nottawasaga.

Those are very, very significant to the people in my area and it is something that is often forgotten when the Oak Ridges moraine is discussed and talked about.

The moraine covers over 1,000 square kilometres. It passes through 14 municipalities. So it is very significant as to the number of people that it involves and directly affects.

The Oak Ridges moraine is the divide or height of land between water courses flowing both north and south. Rain falling on the moraine is rapidly infiltrated through the well drained moraine soils into the groundwater reservoirs. They have two main functions. They have a recharge function where the water goes through the sand and the gravel and is purified and eventually flows from the moraine south to feed the tributaries into Lake Ontario and north to feed areas such as Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe. But there is also the discharge function. Any contamination of this groundwater could have potentially more wide-ranging effects because many of these communities rely on the moraine aquifers for their drinking water, but also these waters eventually lead into our lakes that we use for various reasons and various sources, particularly pleasure craft in the Lake Simcoe area. The water quality and water quantity is very, very important and very, very critical for that particular activity.

Any actions that could have a substantial impact on the delicate balance of hydrology in the moraine would have a similar wide-ranging impact throughout the area.

The moraine contains many important aspects of plants and wildlife in the greater metropolitan area. It has a number of small lakes that rely on this to provide this kind of abyss in the middle of a very heavily populated area. These slopes of the moraine provide the source area for many streams and contain many small wetlands. The open spaces and the natural areas are very significant to help us with our clean air and our clean

water. Anything that would take place in this area or any damage to this area would affect all of us very critically.

Obviously the forest acts as a filter for our air, just as the wetlands provide that filter when water meets soil. So that is very significant.

It is also very important for the wildlife in the area. This is one continuous piece of land that allows wildlife, deer, nesting areas, nursery areas. All these areas are involved in this particular piece of land and it is very, very significant for the wildlife in the area to be able to move as their feeding grounds or their nesting or migration is necessary to move from one area of the province to the other. It is also very important to the people of the greater metropolitan area. Many of us recognize the importance of open space and green land as our way of life. We use and often take advantage of the Oak Ridges moraine for improving our health physically.

I recognize I am running out of time, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot to be said for it but it is certainly important for our physical and our mental well-being that we have the opportunity to take part in it.

The federal government is very involved in the process of examining and assessing what is going on in the Oak Ridges moraine. It is one area where there is presently a strategy going on. The royal commission studied the headwaters as it affected Lake Ontario and certainly the lakes to the north and there is now a provincial study taking place.

One of the things that concerns me greatly though in this study is the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority, a very significant group that is affected very significantly by the Oak Ridges moraine, has not been invited to take part in this study. The authority is involved in this very process. They have requested of the minister of natural resources to be involved.

Their letter states: "This authority is attempting to maintain all water courses, wetlands and headwater areas that we must be aware of and directly involved with policy development affecting these areas. Through our environmentally significant area study we have identified biological ESAs but also recharge-discharge areas. We have carried out a number of projects in the headwater areas to improve stream habitat for our cold water systems".