

*Private Members' Business*

The most environmentally sensitive area of the Rouge is located in north eastern Scarborough. Anyone who has ever visited the metropolitan Toronto zoo has seen a very small part of the Rouge Valley and can appreciate its size, its beauty and indeed its uniqueness.

• (1310)

Why is this area so unique and worthy of preservation? The Rouge River Valley system is an incredible natural resource. The valley contains three areas of Carolinian forest designated by the World Wildlife Fund of Canada as critically unprotected. The area also has over 70 different native tree species which is more than can be found in British Columbia's South Moresby Island.

Among the over 40 varieties of fish in the Rouge River two are rare nationally. Of the over 70 bird species the red-shouldered hawk and Cooper's hawk are nationally endangered. Among the over 400 different kinds of flora in the valley 12 are nationally rare, 11 are provincially rare, and 92 are regionally rare.

The forests in the valley are inhabited by deer, bald eagles, foxes, coyotes and 16 other kinds of mammals. In addition, over 63 archaeological sites have been discovered in the valley, some of which are over 9,000 years old.

And all of this, Mr. Speaker, is less than a 40-minute drive from the corner of Bloor and Yonge Streets in downtown Toronto.

Why and how has the valley remained in this natural state? It is mainly through chance that the Rouge Valley has been spared the fate of the Don and the Humber valleys in Toronto.

A great deal of land in Scarborough and Pickering was acquired by the provincial government around 1972. In fact about 80 per cent of the lands in the Rouge system is presently under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Provincial Government. About the same time the federal government acquired land for the proposed Pickering airport. I understand that the Rouge area had always been intended to be a green space between the city of Scarborough and the proposed airport. When the airport plan was shelved by the federal government the Rouge area continued to remain in its natural state ever since.

This has now given us the opportunity to have the entire Rouge River Valley system preserved.

What are the threats against the valley today? It is incredible to think there are those in our community who would rather use the Rouge as a garbage dump, a freeway, or as building lots for million dollar mansions. The threats to the future of the valley are very real, growing, and very disturbing.

The Metropolitan Toronto Council recently approved the use of the Rouge as a potential dump site. The Province of Ontario is considering using the area as a throughway for an eight-lane freeway. The recent leaked provincial cabinet document has called for further development in the valley. Developers in the city continue to push for the construction of million dollar mansions in some of the most sensitive areas of the Rouge.

The Peterson government has failed to come forward to save the valley system.

What alternatives have been proposed? Due to the outstanding work of the Save The Rouge Valley System organization, a proposal has been put forth to preserve the valley as a 10,000-acre park.

Save the Rouge Valley System is a remarkable community based volunteer organization. Started over 17 years ago, SRVS has become one of the largest environmental groups in metro Toronto providing extensive information and education on environmental protection and conservation. SRVS has been awarded the Scarborough environmental award in each of the past five years and its efforts to save the Rouge Valley have gained national recognition.

I have been pleased to work with Jim Robb, president of the Save the Rouge Valley System, Glen De Baeremaeker, Kathy Gregorio, Gloria Rezler, and Lois James. Ron Moeser, who is now a Scarborough city councillor has also worked tirelessly with SRVS as the chairman of the Coalition of Scarborough Community Associations. The mayor of Scarborough, Joyce Trimmer, has also been actively involved in efforts by the SRVS to save the Rouge.

Each week the SRVS conducts walking tours through the Rouge. The Scarborough Board of Education has established an outdoor education centre in the Rouge, where thousands of school children visit and appreciate the beauty and the mysteries of nature. It is a tremen-