

Private Members' Business

ings, Scarborough council decided on July 11, 1988, to zone 5,000 acres around the lower Rouge River for natural environment and rural uses.

Although the Government of Ontario has stated its intentions to save the Rouge ecosystem, the province has yet to act on the federal government's year-old offer of \$10 million toward the establishment of a natural heritage park. The will is clearly there to save the Rouge. What is missing is co-ordination and direction. I therefore feel that it is essential that this House offer its unconditional support to this motion to enter into negotiations with the Province of Ontario. The metro area land was originally acquired to create a regional park. In late 1989 the provincial legislature endorsed the creation of a provincial park.

The federal government has offered financial support. What we need now is action. The motion that is before us today for debate recognizes the urgency of the situation and calls for decisive action. It is a small miracle that the Rouge River Valley system has survived this long. If we want to ensure that it continues to survive then a logical first step would be to support this motion.

In closing, I am hopeful that these negotiations will lead to the adoption of the proposal advocated by the Save The Rouge Valley System organization. This would ensure that the entire system, not just part of it, is inherited by the next generation.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, as you probably know from your own experience, whenever it comes to the allocation of land or the setting aside of land for purposes other than transportation or construction of highways and highrises, it becomes an extremely difficult experience. The Rouge River Valley is no exception to that experience.

Usually we know and we hear that there are important conflicting interests that have to be dealt with and there will always be when we come to the pressure of putting land aside for this type of use, either recreational or wildlife. There will always be excuses put forward whereby this project cannot be implemented.

I submit that this is not a question or an issue that can be resolved on technical grounds because all the technical questions and objections will never be satisfied and answered in a satisfactory manner. This is a political decision, a decision that requires political will.

Evidently in this House today, as a result of the initiatives taken by the member for Scarborough Centre and the member for Scarborough Rouge River, there is political will being generated in this Chamber and the message in a few minutes will be loud and clear that the elected members of all three parties in this House endorse and support enthusiastically the idea of putting aside this land for recreational and wildlife purposes for future generations.

• (1350)

That ought to be registered very clearly and firmly at Queen's Park. We cannot resolve this matter on questions related to transportation, hydro transmission lines, you name it, because we will be involved in this type of exercise for years to come without finding a satisfactory solution.

The point related to political will is therefore of paramount importance. It is important, therefore, in that context also to say a word of appreciation about the role that has been played in highlighting and promoting this issue by the Save The Rouge Valley System association which has not only produced interesting and intelligent material but also has advanced the issue by way of presentations to various groups across metro in a relentless manner over the last two years. Great merit has to go to this particular group if this project ever becomes a reality.

What we are talking about here is the quality of life in metropolitan Toronto. We already missed a golden opportunity with the harbourfront lands which were set aside in 1971. Because of mindless political decisions and poor leadership, they no longer were the object of what was originally intended to be an urban park but became gradually what it is now, namely an almost fully developed piece of real estate.

We have had that experience and we are tired of that type of drifting that has taken place when there was a golden opportunity for the people of Toronto to re-establish contact with its major geographic asset, namely its own Lake Ontario. Now we have another opportunity. We do not want to miss it. It is located perhaps not as