

Candidates support new Oak Ridges Moraine park

By Mark Pavilons

The plan to create the East Humber Headwaters Park, located within the Oak Ridges Moraine in King, comes as good news to everyone.

The area is bounded by the 15th Sideroad, King Road, Dufferin and Bathurst. The owners of some 208 hectares of land in this area are prepared to convey the King parcel to the Province, in exchange for lands in another municipality for development potential. Both provincial candidates in King-Vaughan praise the idea.

Preserving our natural environment is a moral duty on the current generation for future generations, according to Progressive Conservative candidate Stephen Lecce. I recognize the importance of not burdening the next generation with fiscal and environmental mismanagement and degradation. As a Progressive Conservative, I firmly believe that environmental protection and economic development are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary in the interests of creating a growing economy, while concurrently safeguarding our environment.

Lecce noted King is an example of preserving our natural heritage. It's a privilege, but also an enormous responsibility to live in the Oak Ridges Moraine, a vast protected landform. We all have to take responsible steps to preserve the Moraine and with it, the important ecological and hydrological function it serves for the whole of the Greater Toronto Area.

The proposed East Humber Headwaters Park builds on the legacy of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Brought into force by a former Progressive Conservative government in 2001, acting on our shared legacy of conservation, the plan preserves and protects water, plants, animals, agriculture, resources and a unique landscape from the Niagara Escarpment all the way to Rice Lake. As the Progressive Conservative candidate for King-Vaughan, I take great pride in my party's legacy as a leader in conservation efforts here and across the province.

This park will protect 500 acres of land, including crucial headwaters of the Humber River, which feed into Lake Ontario. In addition to the important work of protecting green space and the watershed, the park will be an enormous green space for our families, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts.

I am proud to stand with other local authorities who have endorsed this project, including the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, and the councils of King Township, York Region and the City of Toronto. But ultimately, the power to bring this park to life rests with the Province of Ontario. We need the Ontario Government to bring the lands into public ownership and provide the current landowner with equivalent lands outside the protected area as compensation.

I am calling on the province to make the right decision to create the East Humber Headwaters Park a legacy project that will enhance our environment for future generations.

Liberal candidate Marilyn Iafrate, echoed those sentiments.

For the last three decades, Iafrate said she's taken an active role and responsibility to protect environmentally sensitive lands in our community.

I have been working with various agencies and individuals since 2017, helping and advocating in every way possible to see that this extremely environmentally sensitive site is safe from any potential future pressures as well as creating an opportunity for all residents to use and benefit from this natural wonder.

This parcel of important land mass must remain in its purest form. We all know the true benefits of the Oak Ridges Moraine as it acts as a natural water purifier and recharging system that we all rely on.

My past actions in protecting the environment are extensive, varied and proven. My love of the moraine and my passion to protect it started in the early 1990s as I fought along-side Vaughan CARES and King-Vaughan Environmental Coalition to stop a mega-dump from being built on the Oak Ridges Moraine. I continued this fight to close down the Keele Valley Landfill which was built on the Oak Ridges Moraine, the portion known as the Maple Spur.

I am also on record with the Ontario Municipal Board as having opposed the reactivation of a sand and gravel pit on the Oak Ridges Moraine in north/east Vaughan. More recently, on a recorded vote at Vaughan City Hall, I opposed a developer's request to change the designation of his lands, located in the Oak Ridges Moraine, to developable (settlement) lands.

Iafrate vows that she will work with King Township, TRCA, local residents and the Provincial government to make this project a reality.

?Protecting our environment is the current government's priority!?