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Diffused growth plan could serve all

Comment

by Bruce Haire

The provincial Liberal government started off looking at growth and controlling it under the caption of “smart growth” but it is more properly labelled “dumb growth”.

Yes, it seemed that a lot of money could be saved in terms of infrastructure and servicing costs by packing growth in Barrie and of course the lands it wants to annex in north Innisfil.

But the mistake the Liberals made was to commission an environmental study at the same time examining the impact of growth on Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga watershed.

The Lake Simcoe study showed that Barrie centred growth would be disastrous for the Lake.

Of course, when the IGAP study (Intergovernmental Action Plan) was completed, the province with its head buried in the sand only gave the environment a 25% weighting and gave economic factors a 75% weighting and chose the Barrie and Area Single Node Scenario to put an additional 100,000 people south on the 400 corridor down into what is now Innisfil.

On Friday, we had the latest update from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority on the Assimilative Capacity study for the Lake.

Once again the Conservation Authority warned that the impact of such a growth scenario produced phosphorus and pollution levels flowing from the current City of Barrie and then Lover’s Creek to levels that were uncontrollable.

This could bring such an environmental degradation in Kempenfelt Bay that the cold water fishery of Lake Simcoe would be destroyed and even the precious jewel of Barrie’s own waterfront would be destroyed.

In fact, the Conservation Authority recommended some type of diffuse growth plan as one best able to control environmental impacts and avoid creating the scenario of concentrating the pollution on Kempenfelt Bay.

It seems that we might as well stop those annexation talks of Barrie and Innisfil right now. The Conservation Authority is saying very

clearly the Lake cannot sustain the recommended growth in that area.

Simcoe County must develop a growth management plan. It seems that a plan that disperses growth through many communities is the best for the environment.

Yes, servicing will cost more than if we put all the growth in Barrie, but the upside is that we save the Lake. We even save Barrie from itself in preserving the quality of its waterfront.

The other important part of the LSRCA recommendations is to move to Best Management Practices in terms of controlling storm water runoff from urban and urbanizing areas.

A lot of municipalities want some growth. It seems that a diffused growth plan such as the LSRCA could support, would have the least impact on the environment, could be supported by virtually all the municipalities and even by the citizens of Barrie if not by the politicians.

Perhaps, Barrie should hold a referendum for its citizens. Should we continue to push growth or should we save Lake Simcoe? Guess which way Barrie residents would vote.

Negativity surrounds BBP Resort talks

Dear editor,

The five year process which has led to the recent Big Bay Point agreement has been a very positive experience, but it has been marred all along by the negativity of the Innisfil District Association (IDA). The most recent example of this is Don Avery’s letter in your paper on April 25, 2007.

In evaluating Mr. Avery’s claim that his group has been shut out, your readers should know the following. The IDA participated fully in the original week-long charrette five years ago, as well as in the one conducted in February this year. The IDA is a full party to the OMB process, and has copies of all supporting materials prepared for the

current proposal, and previous versions. The IDA was at the negotiating table for numerous meetings convened by the Provincial Facilitator, with full status, sitting in the same room with Geranium, the Province, the County, the Town, the Residents of Innisfil Association (RIA) and the Sandy Cove Home Owners Association (SCHOA). On too many occasions for me to remember, I have offered to sit down face to face with the IDA. Those offers have all been refused.

Mr. Avery says his group had no input into the unit and marina slip numbers. I can tell you that at no time during the February charrette or the Provincial Facilitator’s process did his

group put the issue of numbers on the table. They were represented by a very capable lawyer, and so I presume that this was a deliberate strategy. Now, it’s too late to talk numbers.

It is true that the IDA was not invited to participate in the first phase of the Provincial Facilitator’s process, but that was the Facilitator’s decision. It was a principled and common-sense position: she wanted to find out first if there was any possibility of an agreement between Geranium and the key public authorities (the Province, County and Town). Her decision was not just with respect to the IDA - it applied equally to everyone else in the process, including the RIA, SCHOA

and even the City of Barrie. None of them are complaining; in fact, the RIA and SCHOA support the settlement, and the City of Barrie is satisfied and has withdrawn from the process. Your readers might also be interested to know that the IDA’s lawyer recently said in a published comment on the Provincial facilitator’s process that it was “very constructive and helpful.”

And by the way, it’s a bit of a stretch for Mr. Avery to say that “three parties” did not sign the agreement. As he well knows, two of the three are related companies which jointly own adjacent land. Similarly, it’s a measure of the desperate nature of the IDA’s position that Mr. Avery continues to rely on criticisms of

pervious versions of the project, rather than speak to what’s on the table now.

I will close with Mr. Avery’s comments on Lake Simcoe. We have never opposed an holistic approach to cleaning up the Lake. What we’ve said is that there is no reason for our project, which will improve lake quality over current conditions, to wait for that larger initiative to happen. Nor are we against a comprehensive growth management strategy. We have simply pointed out that resort development is not within the ambit of growth management studies, which are designed to deal with permanent accommodation.

Earl Rumm
Geranium Corp.

Client reps at every BBP meeting

Dear editor,

Re: Proposed development by Kimvar, Big Bay Point, Innisfil

Addressed to: Premier McGuinty and Minister Garretsen

We represent The Residents of Innisfil Association and The Sandycove Acres Homeowners’ Association. Collectively, these groups speak on behalf of hundreds of full time residents of the Town of Innisfil and are the largest ratepayer groups on Big Bay Point. Our clients are parties to the ongoing Big Bay Point Ontario Municipal Board hearing. Having read the April 24th press release by certain “environmental” groups (Environmental defence being one of them), our client asked us to send you this letter immediately.

As residents of Big Bay Point, our client’s take a very keen, personal and passionate interest in the environmental health of the area. Our client’s live, work and play in the area and so, arguably, the health

of Lake Simcoe is a more personal issue o them than it might be to environmental groups which have a more general concern. Our clients’ do not have lobbyists or media specialists, nor do they have the ear of the press. This letter, accordingly, hopes to bring their important perspective to your attention before you make any decision on whether or not to declare a matter of provincial interest under the Planning Act.

In addition to insisting that the development meet stringent environmental standards, our client takes an interest in all aspects of Big Bay Point including the cultural, social and economic health of the area. We imagine that you do the same when making decisions on governance that affect different aspects of Ontarians’ lives.

Whereas none of the groups who authorized the press release attended any of the Provincial Facilitator’s meetings (nor any of the detailed

and lengthy charettes, nor any of the OMB proceedings), representatives of our client attended every meeting. Our clients are very concerned that the press release might cast doubt on the environmental protection afforded by the settlement to date and render useless all of the time and hard work undertaken by our client, the Province, the County of Simcoe, the Town of Innisfil, and the Provincial Facilitators Office. Having been involved in these detailed and lengthy processes, our clients are deeply concerned that a single press release, by groups who chose to not get involved in the process, could have that effect. The regional and local levels of government have protected the public interest expertly and the Province, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs involvement in the Provincial Facilitator’s mediation, has done a remarkable job protecting the environment. Our clients take great comfort from their

collective wisdom and involvement.
Ira. T. Kagen

Donations needed for Gilford music program

I am working to help create a youth and children’s music program at The Gilford United Church.

I am asking for donations of any kind of musical instruments, new or used. Things that we need are tambourines, drums, guitars, shakers or any music instrument that you are no longer wanting or needing. We also need a small TV and DVD player for a Karaoke night.

Any help would be appreciated. We can pick up anytime.

If you can make a donation, please contact Dawn at (705) 456-2555.