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**Public Information Centre #1**  
**Re: Lands Adjacent to the Eramosa Karst**

**Hamilton Naturalists' Club Comments**

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club (HNC) urges the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) to ensure that 36 hectares of land east of the Eramosa Karst in upper Stoney Creek, owned by the citizens of Ontario and managed by ORC, are protected from development and used as parkland.

In 2006 the Province gave 73 hectares of land to the Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) so that this treasure can be protected and preserved for this and future generations. In early 2008, an additional 2.8 hectares was given to the HCA to increase the protected area. These lands have become the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area. These were praiseworthy and far sighted decisions. Now the ORC must decide what happens to more lands adjacent to the new conservation area.

The HNC joins with many residents of the area, the HCA, karst experts Marcus J. Buck, Dr. Stephen Worthington, and Dr. Derek Ford as well as other local environmental groups, including Friends of the Eramosa Karst, in asking that these lands also be preserved as parkland. It is essential that the building of houses or any other type of development not be allowed in this area so that the feeder streams that flow into the Karst and thus the Karst itself can be better protected.

Local Karst experts Marcus Buck and Dr. Derek Ford as well as biologist Joe Minor have identified a number of threats which development would cause for the Karst. These include road salt, oil, garden fertilizer and pesticide pollution of streams, alteration of stream flow and water chemistry, alterations of flow patterns by excavations into bed rock, flow diversion by litter entering the sinking streams and illegal dumping into the Conservation Area. These experts believe that the 36 hectare feeder area must remain undeveloped and be added to the Conservation Area. We support this view.

We consider that the process which has selected the preferred alternative for these lands, "Sell land and Protect Sensitive Lands, while pursuing Land Use Approvals", was biased in favour of selling the land for economic return. These lands have immense value as a restored natural area, as wildlife habitat, as urban parkland where residents can walk and experience nature and as a buffer of protection for the karst. Such values are not properly considered in the analysis.

The proponents of the ORC preferred "Sell and Protect" alternative believe that the excavations below ground caused by development will have minimal impact to the bedrock aquifer due to the 3 meter clay-based deposits overlying bedrock in the area. This does not seem a reasonable contention when one considers the large amount of permeable gravel and sand backfill which is used to surround foundations, water and sewer piping and natural gas pipelines. Such fill is certain to alter ground water flow patterns. Also, as there is an area of bedrock ridge exposed, there must be an area surrounding the ridge with much less than 3 meter thickness of overlying clay-based deposits.

The problem of the inevitable litter from adjacent residential areas entering the karst and blocking sinkholes is only increased under the ORC preferred alternative as are the problems posed by contaminants released in the newly developed areas.

A karst area is not a static system. As discussed in the MNR Eramosa Karst ANSI report (2003), the dissolution of rock over thousands of years will cause sinkpoints, overflow sinks and soil pipes to gradually move southeast along the creeks. By naturalizing the feeder area in question, we allow space for the karst to evolve without having the karst features move close to or into a residential area.

Although we are not in favour of the preferred “Sell and Protect” alternative, we do recognize that a sophisticated storm water management system, as outlined in the Public Information Centre presentation, will be required to protect the karst area from contamination by spills even if the feeder area is naturalized.

We have a one time opportunity to provide additional protection for the karst and to create an additional natural area for future generations which will be lost if the lands are sold to private interests and developed. These lands are now in public ownership and must remain in public ownership in the hands of an organization devoted to naturalizing and protecting them. The HNC believes that the wise choice is to transfer the lands to the HCA to be added to the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area.

As early proponents of the original decision by the province, we strongly believe that saving the adjacent lands from development is in the long-term public interest and is essential to preserving this splendid example of karst topography.

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