

Citizen's group hosts public conference on environmental issues

The future of Ontario's protected green spaces may very well depend on the fate of three very important pieces of legislation.

To that end, the Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), with support of other concerned environmental groups, is hosting a presentation and round-table discussion next Wednesday, April 9 at the Kingbridge Conference Centre and Institute in King City.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan are all up for review in 2015 as mandated in the respective Acts, which brought them into effect nearly 10 years ago.

This event, the first of its kind, will educate and empower attendees to understand the success of these conservation plans to protect our land, water and quality of life, and the steps everyone can take to ensure their protection and enhancement.

It brings CCKT's partners, Ontario's three predominant environmental coalition action groups, together with guest speaker Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller and an expert discussion panel.

Greg Locke, chair of CCKT will be event moderator and MC.

"This event is really the first of its kind," says Locke. "The three coalition groups representing each plan have never been under one roof before to discuss this common theme."

"CCKT has made these provincial reviews job one in our mandate for the next two or more years, however long it takes to be conducted and implemented. We know these reviews will be contentious, for developers, industrialists and even some farmers would like to see these plans significantly watered down if not eliminated."

"In addition, it's an election year for all municipal governments in Ontario, and looking increasingly likely we'll be at the polls for a provincial election this spring. For this and other reasons, we know the time is now to bridge this gap and educate, empower and engage our citizenry, to have their say in both maintaining and enhancing these critical pieces of our sustainable environment. Let's make these conservation plans part of the discussion with our elected officials, candidates, and government ministries."

Panellist Gord Miller is Commissioner of Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. Locke hails his ability to reach out and engage people in a non-partisan way. An expert panel includes Erin Shapero, Debbie Crandall and Bob Patrick. Each coalition group represents a multitude of other local organizations.

David Donnelly is the fourth panelist. He's a staunch environmental lawyer and advocate with many successes under his belt, most recently representing Stewards of the Moraine in the Eliopolous wedding facility OMB challenge in King.

"STORM is thrilled to be a part of this evening organized by Concerned Citizens of King Township," says Debbie Crandall of Save The Oak Ridges Moraine.

"It's amazing, 25 years ago people from across the Oak Ridges Moraine gathered in King City and formed this new group called Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition. So it's quite appropriate for CCKT to be hosting a gathering of people and groups from across the Greenbelt to send a clear message that we're still in the business of protecting our land, water and rural communities. Here's to the next 25 years."

The schedule for the night includes a reception from 6-7 p.m., followed by Miller's presentation at 7:15. The expert panel Q&A discussion runs 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Admission is free, but CCKT would like you to register to get an idea of attendance. For more, visit cckt.ca.