

# Naturalists will fight Malcolmson Park development City's last forest area

By MARLENE BERGSMAN  
Standard Staff

The last remaining forest in the city should be left alone, say local naturalists vowing to fight the \$4-million development proposed for Malcolmson Park.

"I'll fight it all the way," said Mary Ellen Foley of the Peninsula Field Naturalists, who plans to make a presentation to city council.

Instead of the skating rink, public greenhouse, ornamental gardens, test gardens, nature trails and the picnic area proposed by the city's parks and recreation department, "what I really want is the park left alone, fenced in and patrolled," said Ms. Foley.

The St. Catharines Local Council of Women is also op-

posed to the park's development and is hoping to raise public awareness of the area's uniqueness.

"People just aren't aware of where the green areas are and the need for them in cities," said Gracia Janes. "It's been left on the backburner. Consciousness is just being raised."

The city's parks and recreation department is currently analysing the results of a questionnaire distributed at two January public meetings, said operations manager Rod Hollick.

He expects to be reporting on public comments and recommending changes to council by the end of April or early May, he said.

He acknowledges the naturalists' concerns but said "we believe the concept plan takes into account natural wildlife, migratory birds and nesting

birds."

Grantham Ward alderman Brian McMullan said he thinks the city's development plans can be reconciled with concern for the environment if the plans are scaled down.

"Personally, I'm looking for a more passive use than staff recommended," said Ald. McMullan. "It's an area of unique wildlife, and I'd like to see that protected."

But he thinks the area is not used enough. "I would like to see some amenities to draw more people there. As a park, it's underutilized. A lot of people don't know where it is."

He said formal gardens and a public greenhouse would suit the Garden City's image, and are "something else to draw the average citizen there."

But it is precisely the prospect of attracting more people which worries the naturalists.

## should be left wild

"Even disturbances on the edge of such a natural area would discourage (wildlife) breeding," said Mrs. Janes.

And because it is isolated from any other natural areas, there is little chance for it to be revitalized if human interference scares animals away, she said.

"This is a very special area," she said. "It's not just any old plot of ground. The politicians should take responsibility for it."

Ms. Foley said a compromise is better than massive development, but she would prefer to have the woods left wild.

"If I see I've got large support, then I'll insist on what is really right for the place," she said, "and that's leave it alone."

She said the mandate of a parks department encourages "manicuring" but some truly wild areas must be protected as

well.

"We've got to change the way we approach plants," she said. Rotten branches have to be left to rot, to provide a home for insects which feed birds and

other animals.

"We can't look at weeds as weeds. This is supposed to be a wild place. We have to leave it up to nature to decide how it's going to be."