

Notes taken at a Meeting of the General Membership of the Harmony Residents Group in the large meeting room of the Virgil Arena on July 8, 2009.

R. Busbridge began this meeting at 7:12 PM with 19 people present.

He presented a video of a proposed Onghiara National Heritage Park for the federal government (Parks Canada) land north of Lakeshore Road and adjacent to the western boundary of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In brief, the plan is to create a nature park, rehabilitate creeks, control lakeshore erosion, conserve the forest, protect the species of wildlife in the area and, in general, enhance the environment, creating hiking and cycling paths, birdwatching stations, structured wetlands, make archaeological investigations of historic sites and build an environmentally friendly centre, such as that built at the Balls Falls conservation area for information, interpretation and research. Perhaps a Peace Garden could be created to commemorate 200 years of peace since the War of 1812/14. Such a park would minimize the human footprint on the area by controlling access, but only to sensitive areas.

A nature park would require minimal capital expenditures and would have a beneficial effect on existing residential areas but would take advantage of the growing year round eco-tourism market. Operational costs would be modest and revenue could come from public membership and fundraising, education and instruction courses and research grants.

The Group needs to find partners, establish better governance, complete a feasibility study, a site plan, an economic case study, prepare an operational model and communicate this information to the public.

His presentation ended at 7:42 PM. It was an expansion of that made earlier to town council and will be presented to regional council on July 9, about 7 PM at the regional offices on Schmon Parkway.

Some questions followed and a general discussion of matters such as the congestion and noise that would be created by Project Niagara (PN) and their misleading comparison with the Shaw Festival. The creation of a "community builders group" and the expensive full page advertisements in the Niagara Advance newspaper, paid by the supporters of PN such as some wineries and Casino Niagara, etc., suggest that the public has become aware of the probable shortcomings of PN and the possibility of a preferable alternative use of the site. The Group cannot compete financially with the PN advertising but can use flyers and personal canvassing to present its viewpoint and raise questions about the effect of PN on existing organizations such as the local music festival, other tourist attractions within the Niagara area and even on the Shaw Festival. Group members should continue to write to the media and to our federal and provincial representatives and their Ministers who would be involved with the Lakeshore Road site.

This meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

C. James, Secretary.