

BRIEF PRESENTED TO SELECT COMMITTEE
ON CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

by the Committee on Drainage

Introduction Increasingly, across the Province, there is growing concern over comprehensive land use. Until fairly recently, land use has generally been the responsibility of individual owners, but gradually the Community has seen the need for planned land use as it affects the Total Community. It would appear that community responsibility is going to increase in the area of land use. Looking into the future, with population increases and greater industrialization, it appears that extensive planning is going to be required to accommodate people, industry, recreational facilities and agriculture, while keeping in mind the preservation of wild life and plant life, the conservation of water resources and other community needs.

One aspect of this matter of land use that has been causing some concern has been the growing conflict between those people interested in improving the drainage of land in order to permit more effective agriculture, and those people interested in preserving land in an undrained state in order to conserve water supplies and provide areas attractive to fish and wildlife. Unfortunately, it often happens that both aims cannot be accorded equal consideration in a given situation, and one aim must then become subservient to the other in order to prevent a stalemate that would result in stagnation.

Because his professional activity brings him into close association with both the agriculturists and the conservationists, as well as those people affected by the programs of both groups, the Ontario Land Surveyor is in a position to observe more closely than most, this conflict of interest that is developing. For this reason, the Drainage Committee of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors is pleased to have this opportunity to submit the following comments for the consideration of your Committee.

Benefits of Drainage When the first Provincial Drainage Act was passed, some parts of the Province were swamp unfit for human habitation, much less any type of agricultural development. Over the years, vast and complicated systems of drainage were constructed, with the result that Ontario now has large areas of agricultural land whose quality and productivity is surpassed in very few places in the northern hemisphere. For example, the total farm income in Kent County alone was over \$75,000,000 in 1964, and most of this could not have been realized without adequate drainage. A large part of the wealth of the Province has sprung from this agricultural development and the industries allied with it. In order to preserve this wealth, care must be taken to see that nothing is done that would make it unnecessarily difficult to maintain the drainage systems on which this agriculture depends.

Criticisms of Drainage It is a recognized fact that there have been a few instances in which swamps and bush areas have been drained and, although this has made possible the cultivation of additional land, the increase in value of this land has been offset by the damage done in lowered water-tables, dried-up wells and loss of cover for wildlife.

Existing Drainage Legislation In 1962 a study of existing drainage legislation was made by a Select Committee of the Provincial Legislature and briefs were received and thoroughly considered. The Drainage Act, 1962-63 is the result of this study.

Generally speaking, The Drainage Act, 1962-63 is a combination of drainage practice and drainage laws as they have evolved over the years, and it is under the provisions of this act and its predecessors that the various Municipal drainage systems are constructed and maintained. It must be clearly understood, however, that The Drainage Act, 1962-63 is strictly a "procedural" Act that, in the wording of its own Section 3 (1), deals with "land requiring drainage". Until it has been decided that an area does, in fact, require drainage, the area in question has no status under The Drainage Act, 1962-63 and should not be dealt with under its provisions. It is only after the owners affected and the municipal council have made the decision that drainage is required, that the Engineer is appointed and the provisions of The Drainage Act, 1962-63 are brought into operation as a means to carry out the wishes of the people.

It is quite apparent then, that the provisions of The Drainage Act 1962-63 do not lend themselves to settling the prior questions of land use (to drain or not to drain). Attempts to use this Act for this purpose are misguided and usually they produce inconclusive results.

Recommendations (a) In order to resolve the differences in opinion when the aims of the agriculturists and the conservationists come into direct conflict, and to eliminate the present unsatisfactory practice of trying to do this under the provisions of The Drainage Act, 1962-63, when this Act was not set up for this purpose, this Committee of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors strongly urges that consideration be given by the Select Committee on Conservation Authorities to a legislative program that would expand the activity of existing local planning boards and establish boards in those areas presently without them. These boards should be given the responsibility of making the basic decision as to what lands should ultimately be developed as drained lands (agricultural, residential or industrial) and what land should be kept as swamp or bush in order to conserve and preserve the natural resources of the Province.

(b) Conservation Authorities would be required to play an important part in collecting and making available to these boards data that would assist them in arriving at reasonable conclusions.

(c) It is considered to be of the utmost importance that the membership of the boards be kept local in character since it is the local people who are most knowledgeable in the history and potential of the land and its physical limitations.

Conclusion Under such an expanded planning program, administered locally, we believe that the interests of the agriculturists, the conservationists and, in fact, the whole population of the Province, could best be served by making the most effective use of all the lands with which we are so richly endowed.

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C.O. Corbett, Chairman

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article, starting with two words "Professional Contacts" in larger type; particularly the last sentence, to quote: "Even if the investor never becomes expert in the real estate field, he can quickly and easily obtain expert guidance from his lawyer, accountant, broker, or appraiser, all of whom should be familiar with the local realty scene." Apparently the writer of the article does not, in his concept of professional people, include the Surveyor.

Could it be that his experience with Surveyors has been that their department was anything but on a professional level? As long as we always consider such statements as amusing, we cannot expect our Public Image to improve.