

WR.437

THE METROPOLITAN TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

CORRESPONDENCE

from

LOIS GRIFFIN, LUCIANO MARTIN AND SUZANNE BARRETT

regarding

LOCATION OF AQUARIUM

Water and Related Land Management Advisory Board

Meeting #7/89

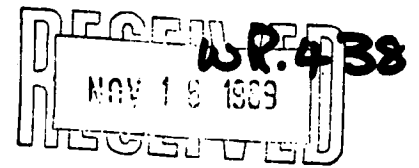
November 17, 1989



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Toronto, Ontario
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Lois Griffin
Metro Councillor
Rexdale-Thistletown

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MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman and Members
Water & Related Land Management
Advisory Board

Date: November 17, 1989

From: Lois Griffin
Metro Councillor
Rexdale-Thistletown

Re: Aquarium of Metropolitan Toronto

There is wide support for this facility and I am one of those supporters. However, there is some debate as to whether an alternate location on the Motel Strip would be preferable to this site in Humber Bay Park. There has been some discussion on possible sites along the Motel Strip, and I would like to see those discussions continue. Therefore, I am suggesting a small amendment to the staff recommendation, as follows:

"The Board recommend to the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority that Metropolitan Toronto and Etobicoke be advised that the Authority would prefer a location on the Motel Strip, which would not impact on Humber Bay Park.

The Board further recommend to the Authority that Metropolitan Toronto and Etobicoke be advised that should such an alternate location be impossible, then the Authority would concur, in principle, to enter into a long term (99 years) lease" (continue with the staff recommendation)

I apologize for being unable to attend the meeting today, but would appreciate your favourable consideration of this amendment.

:lk

L.G.

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The Acting Chairman,
Metropolitan Toronto and Region
Conservation Authority,
5 Shoreham Cres.,
North York, Ontario

15 November, 1989

Re: Site for the Aquarium of Metropolitan Toronto

Dear Sir:

I strongly support the efforts to locate the Aquarium on the Etobicoke Waterfront.

I also wish that its site be selected so as to minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The proposed location in Humber Bay Park raises some serious concerns. It should be used only if all possible efforts to find a feasible alternative in the neighbourhood fail.

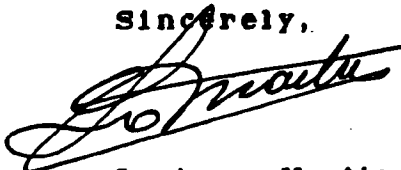
I recommend the following condition be included with any early approval-in-principle by the MTRCA:

That final approval of the site in Humber Bay Park East be granted only if, after an intensive and exhaustive search, a suitable alternative location cannot be found in the vicinity.

I hope that the Authority will cooperate in the search efforts in which the Etobicoke Environment Committee is participating.

I respectfully request that the above recommendation be placed before the appropriate Board and the full Authority.

Sincerely,



Luciano Martin,
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Tel.: 741-5346

SUZANNE BARRETT
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WR. 440

Water and Related Land Management Advisory Board
MTRCA
5 Shoreham Drive
Downsview
Ontario M3N 1S4

17 November 1989

Re: Etobicoke Motel Strip Public Amenity Scheme
Aquarium of Metropolitan Toronto

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board,

I am a resident of Etobicoke. My family and I have been enjoying the Humber Bay Park East for many years. I belong to several environmental groups, including the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Toronto Field Naturalists. In addition, I have professional experience in the field of waterfront planning and have recently been working for the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, as an advisor on environmental issues.

I should like to comment on two of the items on your agenda today: the Etobicoke Motel Strip and the Aquarium of Metropolitan Toronto. I have also made similar submissions recently to the Parks and Property Committee of Metro Toronto and to the Development Committee of the City of Etobicoke. (This is one of those complicated inter-jurisdictional issues !)

Etobicoke Motel Strip - Environmental Management Master Plan

I have reviewed this study and am left with serious doubts about the adequacy of some of the environmental analyses undertaken. The report raises as many questions as it answers, and has a number of major deficiencies.

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I am concerned about the amount of lakefilling proposed in the scheme. While I realise that any lakefilling would be undertaken according to the Improved Lakefill Quality Control Program, there are still risks associated with (i) the implementation of the program, and (ii) the often unpredictable effects of altering shoreline configurations on water circulation and the accumulation of contaminated sediments. There is no discussion of the potential effects on other parts of the waterfront.

I am not convinced that the proposed deflector arm will in fact result in improved water quality. It appears unlikely that the semi-enclosed embayment between the Motel Strip and the Humber Park would have adequate circulation and exchange with Lake Ontario. In fact the report admits that "the exchange rate with a deflector arm is anticipated to be less than that of the base case ..." (p36).

The report does not address the existing problem of contaminated sediments. In addition, would the arm aggravate this in-place pollutants problem by creating more areas of low circulation where contaminated sediments can accumulate ?

The report is inconclusive regarding the impacts of the Humber WPCP due to uncertainty regarding the future location of the outfall, if it is extended. Currently, the Humber WPCP outfall is located adjacent to the opening to Lake Ontario that would result if a short deflector arm constructed. Thus it appears that the effluent would have a direct route into the enclosed embayment.

The water quality model is limited to fecal coliforms and suspended solids although "other contaminants such as heavy metals, total phosphorus, total Kjeldahl nitrogen and other organic and chemical contaminants may be of greater significance if permitted to concentrate or accumulate within the embayment". (p53). The report recommends that further study be undertaken to assess the potential impacts of these additional contaminants. In view of the terms of reference for the study to investigate, evaluate and make recommendations with regard to existing water quality as well as potential impacts, this is clearly an admission of a major deficiency in the consultants' study.

The proposal to use wetlands as part of the storm water management system represents an innovative approach which is certainly worth trying. Properly implemented, this might help to reduce pollution loads to the embayment, and set an example for waterfront development elsewhere. However, a few questions arise: What are the implications to wildlife of developing

wetlands over existing contaminated sediments ? How large would the wetlands need to be ? How will the stormwater be conveyed to the wetlands ? What wetland management would be required ? How will the effectiveness of the wetlands be evaluated ? Who will do the monitoring and who will pay ?
What happens if they don't work ?

Finally, section 3.5. of the report contains a long list of information deficiencies and recommended studies. These are all matters that the consultants feel should be investigated before the final designs of a deflector arm and the wetlands are prepared.

Aquarium of Metropolitan Toronto

I wish to express my strong opposition to the proposal to locate the Aquarium in the Humber Bay Park East. I am not opposed to the Aquarium itself; I believe it will be an excellent facility to enhance development on the Etobicoke waterfront. However I feel that it should be located in the Motel Strip, in association with the other buildings to be developed there, and not in the Humber Bay Park East.

As I understand it, Humber Bay Park was originally created by the MTRCA because there was an acute shortage of public parkland on the Etobicoke waterfront. It has become one of the most successful parks on the Metro Toronto waterfront. It is popular for a variety of informal activities including walking, jogging, bird-watching, picnicking, kite-flying, and simply enjoying the lake. It is also an invaluable educational resource for university courses, school trips and other groups such as naturalists, cubs, brownies and so on.

Much of the success of the park is due to its semi-wild character, due to a management approach that has allowed parts of the area to develop naturally, providing habitat for many species of resident and migrating wildlife. The nearshore waters are well known as a favoured location for wintering waterfowl. I have watched this natural development over the years since the park was created and predict that it will continue to become a richer environment in the future, through these natural processes.

The value of the Park as a peaceful, semi-natural open space will increase as Etobicoke's waterfront is developed, particularly with the high-density residential development proposed for the adjacent Motel Strip.

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Given the character and values of the Humber Bay Park East, I believe that a major Aquarium, with its attendant high numbers of visitors, cars, buses, traffic movement, parking requirements and so on, is a totally inappropriate facility. A facility of this scale would have dramatic and negative impacts on the quality of recreational experiences provided by the park. While I understand that studies are underway to try locating parking off-site, the Aquarium and its visitors would still create an intrusion into the away-from-it-all experience of the Park.

I was concerned that the Etobicoke Motel Strip Public Amenity Study did not take advantage of the opportunity to include an assessment of the most appropriate location for the Aquarium. There is potentially land available on the Motel Strip for this purpose. The Public Amenity Scheme proposes a variety of facilities on public land including a fishing centre, boardwalk centre, trail centre and interpretive centre; there is ample space for an aquarium in addition to, or in place of one of these elements.

I feel that, if it was located on the mainland, the Aquarium would be an asset to both the public amenity scheme and the proposed private development on the Motel Strip, in terms of attracting visitors and business. In addition, it would be much easier to provide car access, parking, public transit, eating facilities etc for Aquarium visitors on the Motel Strip than in the Humber Bay Park East.

I should like to ask whether there has been any attempt to consult the users of the Humber Bay Park East about the Aquarium proposal? I should expect that most of them are unaware of this threat, since there has been very little public discussion of the proposal. I also feel that proponents of placing the Aquarium in the Park must be unaware of the numbers of people who use and appreciate the Park just the way it is.

As you may be aware, both Commissioner David Crombie of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront and the recent Toronto Waterfront Charrette have indicated that the Aquarium is an inappropriate use for the Humber Bay Park and that it would be more suitable to locate it on the Motel Strip.

The Metro Parks system is a fine one, admired and envied by other cities in Canada and the United States. The Humber Bay Park East is a significant part of this system, especially since it is the only regional park on the Etobicoke waterfront that includes major natural areas and wildlife habitat; in short, a bit of urban wilderness.

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The future of Humber Bay Park East should be assessed in the context of the growing public awareness of environmental issues, and the increasing interest in outdoor recreation in natural settings. I anticipate that if a decision is made to locate the Aquarium in the Humber Bay Park East, there will be a major public outcry against the degradation of such a special place.

Conclusions

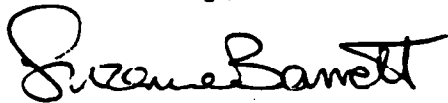
I haven't addressed the Public Amenity portion of the Etobicoke Motel Strip Study as it isn't on your agenda today. However, I should like to point out that it, too, raises a number of issues and warrants your scrutiny, as well as further opportunities for public involvement.

As a conservation authority, you have a special responsibility to ensure that natural resources are carefully protected and managed on behalf of Metro residents. In this case, I believe this means you should:

- (1) Request that an environmental assessment be undertaken for the proposed deflector arm and stormwater management system;
- (2) Refuse the request to locate the Aquarium in Humber Bay Park East; and
- (3) Undertake, in conjunction with the City of Etobicoke, and with full public consultation, an analysis of potential alternative sites for the Aquarium on the mainland of the Motel Strip.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Yours sincerely,



Suzanne Barrett.

cc Hon. Lyn McLeod
Ruth Grier MPP