

Is Pickering the next Sacrificial Lamb in the Native Land Claim Saga?

**By Christine McHale
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As if all the current events in Caledonia, with the beating of one of the builders, plus the recent events in Brantford, are not enough, now the City of Pickering may be the next hapless victim in the string of native land claims in Ontario.

The City of Pickering wants to develop a 70,000 resident community, in the north end of Pickering in what would be Ontario's largest environmentally friendly community. It is estimated that about 35,000 jobs would also be created as a result of this development.

The development project has been cleared by the Supreme Court of Canada which stated that all consultation to do with this project, referred to as the Seaton plan, was adequate and met environmental requirements.

Even the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was satisfied and Bruce Singbush, a senior official with the ministry was quoted as saying, "This plan has become law and it clearly sets a strong direction for the community of Seaton."

"It means the plans for the community of Seaton are final," he said yesterday, pointing out that – if municipal planning decisions move ahead on time – shovels could hit the ground within five years.

The full story can be read by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.thestar.com/article/182457> from the Toronto Sun, published on February 16, 2007.

In the 1970s Ontario expropriated a large section of land bordering West Duffins Creek and the Pickering-Ajax boundary between Highway 7 and the railway corridor planned for a federal airport and community.

The Ontario Liberal government kick started the plans for the Seaton community decades later when it swapped land in the Oak Ridges Moraine for the land in Seaton. More information on the swapping of land can be found through the following link:

<http://www.cityofpickering.com/standard/planning/studies/seaton.html>, which is the planning and development study done for the City of Pickering with regards to the Seaton Land Exchange.

This land swapping is what started the bitter fight with the developer, De Gasperis, and the government. This is what the Supreme Court of Canada finally ruled on, saying it would not grant developer Silvio De Gasperis leave to appeal a lower court decision that rejected his argument that planning for Seaton was flawed and done without adequate consultation.

And just to be sure, the lawyer for Environmental Defence, Mr. David Donnelly, AND even an aboriginal group called the Founding Nations Circle, which worked with the government of Ontario throughout the planning process gave their thumbs up.

So now that all was cleared by the Supreme Court of Canada and given the final blessing by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Environmental Defence and the aboriginal group Founding Nations Circle, you would think all was good for go, wouldn't you?

Well, don't hold your breath.

Suddenly, a Pickering City councilor believes there should be more consultation. Ward 1 City Councillor Jennifer O'Connell, wants more consultation, especially with First Nations groups.

City of Pickering council must be getting the jitters, what with all the land claims issues popping up all over the place.

Now, to be sure, consultations are not necessarily a bad thing, but all the negotiations in Caledonia have not solved the 18 month ongoing occupation there, and it has become painfully apparent that trying to negotiate or consult, or whatever you want to call it with native groups just seems to produce talk, talk and more talk. Even the natives can't agree among themselves just exactly what they want, but it all seems to boil down to money.

Ask the builder in Brantford, Mike Quattrociocchi, how far he got trying to talk to Six Nations Confederacy. According to Mr. Quattrociocchi, they didn't negotiate with him, they tried to extort \$48,000 from him, or 4% of the cost of his development.

Already Pickering council was reminded of the land rights of aboriginals by David Grey Eagle Sanford. But he went a little further than that, it seems, when he made the following statement, "They're going to bring war upon themselves. Do they want a Caledonia situation coming here? Because that's what's next."

The link for this story is: <http://newsdurhamregion.com/news/pickering/article/85862>

So what does he mean by that? Give us exactly what we want or else?

Sit back and watch the show unfold.