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# RISING FROM THE ASHES



## Proper development of the Lakeview lands could seal the deal for future of Mississauga

By Rich Letkeman

"It's a no-brainer," said Jim Tovey, president of Lakeview Ratepayers, leaning back into his chair in the club lounge at Port Credit Yacht Club which, along with the adjacent Lakefront Promenade Park, is arguably Mississauga's most attractive waterfront spread. "Here are our options for Lakeview: 1) leave its post-industrial landscape alone with maybe the addition of a gas-fired power plant, or 2) turn it into the GTA's signature urban waterfront district."

And that's what people are talking about in parts of City Hall, in the Ontario Government's Energy Ministry, at the University of Toronto's School of Urban Design, at the Ontario Municipal Board, and in the humble homes of Lakeview ratepayers. "To not opt for number two would be an urban disaster," said Tovey, a carpenter by trade, who thinks constructing Mississauga's future begins and ends in Lakeview.

"Residents who jog and walk their dogs are inspired when they behold the empty lands that very recently were Lakeview Generating Station," he added. "It's a grand and beautiful expanse of blue water, enhanced by Toronto's gorgeous skyline to the northeast."

Lakeview's legacy is 100 years of industrial toil and smoke, of heroic arms manufacturing to supply our World War II troops, the TTC streetcar ending in its west-end loop, and finally, of a decaying industrial economy that used to provide 5,000 jobs.

Jim Tovey's colleague, Professor John Danahy, a University of Toronto urban designer and part of the ratepayers' planning committee, was busy manipulating his laptop computer beside Tovey at PCYC.

"Here it is. We've got a model of a new Lakeview, although of course it's



Professor John Danahy and Jim Tovey (top) looking over conceptual designs for the Lakeview lands that used to be home to a giant power plant (above). Danahy calls plans for the 500 acres a magnificent vision of a complete urban waterfront. Photos by Rich Letkeman

not carved in stone."

He swivelled the LCD screen toward two gathered reporters and pressed some arrow buttons to cause the image to rotate slowly, giving us moving perspectives of tall and low-rise buildings, the yacht and marina basins, the post-industrial-era buildings and the empty lands around the 200-acre former power plant.

We "flew" around the local districts, whose grey buildings had not been coloured in as yet.

"The software? It's called Polytrim and has been developed by Uof T students and faculty. It's innovative, it's enlightening, and when Danahy is done, he expects this plan to be released to be the municipality – an egalitarian, made-in-Mississauga look-see at our future.

Danahy pulled up equal-scale, geomatically enhanced "Google maps", or models, of the West Donlands and Distillery District projects and then superimposed them onto the Lakeview model. They fit easily into the vast Mississauga waterfront. It shows the potential of the Lakeview lands.

Who would have thought Lakeview was that big or Toronto projects were that small? Why have Toronto's waterfront plans been so protracted and loaded with disputes?

The question was too loaded for Danahy. He said, "We have about 500 acres available for development in what should by rights become GTA's biggest, fully planned and best-coordinated, people-friendly waterfront district, right at Toronto's western exit into Mississauga. It's a magnificent vision, or mixture of visions of our ratepayers' group. And it's the last chance in the GTA – unless they go through some massive demolition projects – to design a complete urban waterfront and get it right."

Cont. on page 2

**A native son's reflections on why Lakeview deserves great development – Page 34**

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# Lakeview: The last best chance for change?

Cont. from page 1  
 "One thing you can't make more of is waterfront. And the fact is that cities, towns and planners never seem to look big enough, or far enough ahead."

Most people agree: Mississauga has to look back at itself and redevelop, away from "condo alley" habitats. Vancouver developer Amacon knows this, and is developing a billion-dollar mixed-use village on only 27 acres just west of City Centre, containing pedestrian green space and in-line shops.

But in Lakeview, where does it all start? "Jim [Tovey] and I have been framing the thinking on this for about two years, and we've been enjoying the all-encompassing input of our enthusiastic ratepayers, of whom we are two," said Danahy.

"The ratepayers embrace southeast

Mississauga, from the Lakeshore up to Queensway," said Tovey. "And further east, in Port Credit and Clarkson, there are signs of a merging of landscapes and various industrial properties across the southern strip of the city, punctuated by St. Lawrence Cement and the Clarkson Refinery."

This connecting of the waterfront dots could bring Mississauga's focus back to its traditional centre.

Tovey added: "If we get our plan through [into the framework of the Lakeview District Master Plan], you'll be able to walk along the water's edge for seven kilometres through southeast Mississauga except for a small stretch of nine homes."

"And Lakeview would be GTA's only

community offering 99 per cent waterfront accessibility," added Danahy.

"Where there used to be cooling channels along the shoreline at the power plant, there's a potential to build a beautiful, canal-type community along the waterfront here, without a lot of development money," said Tovey, pointing at the LCD screen.

He notes that Mississauga's modern industrial era is growing dynamically in northern sectors rather than in the south end. The time has come to concentrate on developing an urban waterfront, especially since very few manufacturing activities remain, and expropriation will be either inexpensive or unnecessary.

Many observers are concerned about "dark" brownfields.

"They almost don't exist and they're not

an issue," said Tovey, "because our government kept their facilities (at the power plant) clean, and soil contamination elsewhere in Lakeview is very limited and site-specific."

Detailing how the Lakeview development idea is progressing, Danahy said: "With industrial jobs and Lakeview's industrial land usage having gone virtually obsolete, there is a growing network of people at the city's executive level who are thinking and talking Lakeview redevelopment."

"It's a lot more optimistic than one would guess. No-one we've met doesn't like the idea, and a half-dozen groups are working on it. An urban-design consulting firm, BMI Group is organizing 'visioning' exercises to gather public opinion and ideas, not just on Lakeview but on various entries to the city and along the Lakeshore Road corridor of Port Credit and Clarkson."

Not included in the 500 acres of Lakeview redevelopment lands is the 75-acre Arsenal Park, just approved for development.

Tovey likes the park's connection to the past. "It's here that 40,000 women worked in arms manufacturing during World War II, and here, in 1900 to 1950, when industrial output was the area's best-use profile," he said.

After Arsenal Park was conceived, Tovey became chairman of the ratepayers' heritage committee and dreamed up a Heritage Walk for the park, containing major relics of the wartime arms factory and "study materials" for school boards and student field trips. The Heritage Walk is expected to become the "theme" of the park.

Lakeview residents want to adhere to the Province's Smart Growth plan with medium rather than low density, "and this is a departure from typical community aspirations in Ontario," said Danahy. "People visualize something larger than a West Donlands mixed-use project, plus parks and recreation facilities. Right now we're thinking about five-million square feet, or a billion dollars worth of residential floor space, not including retail and commercial buildings."

"The way our provincial government drew up its Places to Grow legislation, the more density we build into our section of the Lakeshore corridor, the more pressure we take off high-density requirements elsewhere in the city or district."

But there are extremes. The 21-storey condominium tower at Deta and Lakeshore Roads (in Lakeview's extreme east end) is being designed with 199 units jammed into a single acre.

Wait a minute.

Smart Growth is partly about preserving and enhancing traditional neighbourhoods rather than destroying them, and this is explicit in the legislation, explained Danahy.

Town planning in the modern world means community planning - making livable spaces.

At the PCYC meeting, Tovey and Danahy kept trading off ideas for major sports and recreational venues that could make Lakeview a household word in the GTA. Danahy pushed keyboard buttons to flip a football stadium, university campus, Chicago Pier, and a public aquarium onto the Lakeview model on his LCD screen. What about developing a fast commuter [ferry] service to Toronto from the former power plant's huge coal-shipping pier? Or turning the pier into a major, summertime Fisherman's Wharf with charter boats and seafood cafés along the pier?

"Many things are possible if we think on a grand-enough scale," said Tovey, "and many Lakeview residents are doing just that. We've also proposed extending Toronto's and Mississauga's separate LRT routes through Lakeview, another no-brainer and simple thing to do. It would be a boon to southwest GTA transportation, particularly if Lakeview could host a transport hub, a sports arena and, perhaps even a Lakeview Opera House at the same time."

A few developers have even purchased properties in Lakeview recently, says Tovey. "They're keeping their ears and minds open."

Exactly what the people at City Hall and Queen's Park should be doing.



Lakeview development proposal looking south - from a model created by Prof. Jim Danahy and U of Toronto design students. Note the leafy greenery along Lakeshore, and the tiered buildings to keep lovely vistas of the sky and lake.

Which urban planning firm has assisted in planning and designing neighborhoods within each of these premier Brampton residential communities?

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# Lakeview's the answer to our urban angst

To: Premier Dalton McGuinty

Cc: Mayor Hazel McCallion, Councillors Corbasson, Mullin, Prentice, Dale, Adams, Parrish, Iannicca, Mahoney, Saito, McFadden and Carlson.

Subject: The future of Mississauga – development of the Lakeview lands

Dear Premier:

Some dusty old philosopher once said he could write 500 volumes on human folly. Since you're busy, and I'm no philosopher, I'll try and keep this email under a few thousand words.

The greatest folly ever foisted on the City of Mississauga was the building of a coal-fire hydro plant in its southeastern corner. I don't blame anyone for the Lakeview Generating Station which first began construction in 1958.

It was the industrial age, when people were evangelical in their worship of growth, when the province was smitten by Adam Beck's dictum of making hydro plentiful and cheap, and when the environmental movement was a much lighter shade of green. The building of monstrous industrial plants in the middle of residential areas, on eco-sensitive land near a body of life-giving water, was the norm.

Heck, when the Lakeview plant got the go-ahead, Al Gore was still in short pants.

So what if Lakeview's cigarette shaped smokestacks (dubbed the Four Sisters by lake pilots) sprinkled coal dust over half the population of southern Ontario and New York State? So what if this was one of the main causes of acid rain, that helped denude many of our northern lakes of life? So what if we'll never know the effects of this bad air on the three generations of people who lived in and around the plant? So what if the plant's effluents spilled into Lake Ontario for over a half-century causing who knows what kind of cell damage to the fish or the fishermen? So what if in building the plant, it neatly removed most of the lake view to the residents of Lakeview?

It was the rubric of the day: everything was in the offing. We now know the price of unfettered growth. It's a heavy one.

I watched this unfolding narrative while growing up in the shadow of the smokestacks. My grandfather actually worked on their construction. Our neighbour was a "hydro guy." I remember our school, Lakeview Beach Public, taking us there on a field trip. I was awed by its gleaming magnificence, its button-pushing modernity, its pulsating, 24/7 vibrancy. Lakeview was built as "an interim solution to augment hydro-electric sources and provide base-load power until nuclear power plants came on line." At full capacity, 670 highly-trained people worked the plant, and it

RICK  
DRENNAN

EDITOR'S DESK



fed nearly 17 per cent of the province's power demand. The hungry god of progress loved Lakeview.

Before the power plant was built, south of Lakeshore Road was sacred ground. In 1915, Curtiss Aeroplanes and Motors Ltd. established Canada's first aerodrome and flying school. The land between Dixie and Aviation Road was known as the Rifle Range, and many of our troopers in World War II trained right there. They even lobbed artillery shells three miles into the lake from the Lakeview shores to keep in practice.

At Dixie and Lakeshore, the small arms plant produced many of the guns and ammo that helped put Hitler in his place. Thousands of women worked the plant during the war years, many staying on to live and marry and raise kids in Lakeview.

Canada and the world will be forever indebted to those women who helped drive the war industry. Later on, Lakeview folded into what became the Town of Mississauga.

Our first mayor was Robert Speck, a grocery store owner and Lakeview resident.

The post-World War II era wasn't kind to the place. The army camp was used as cheap housing for welfare cheats, dead-enders, and decent, but down-on-their-luck families. It was a dumping ground for the great unwashed, a Hogarth painting. Toughs roamed the streets, The local nightclub/dancehall was nicknamed the "Bucket of Blood." Lakeview got a bad rep and suffered its first black eye. The hydro plant made it a matching pair when it began to spill its filth. Lakeview became the dumping ground for industry and humanity.

It suffered the weight without sharing in the benefits of Mississauga's riches.

Today, Lakeview's water treatment plant

processes 70 per cent of our region's wastewater. It also supplies two-thirds of Peel's water and 40 per cent to York Region. Peel gets multi-millions in its sweetheart deal with York.

So how has Lakeview been paid back for all it has provided, then and now?

In the mid-1950s, Ontario Hydro secured the land south of the Lakeshore for development. The lands around the plant were zoned industrial. The ponds and hillocks and little lost places that sported a unique ecosystem and offered a bucolic playground for local kids, was paved over.

Suddenly, it wasn't such a wonderful place to live. Fences were erected with barbed wire tops and NO TRESPASSING signs. The locals were kept on the outside looking in, coughing up coal dust, watching as the plant spewed out its poison.

The Four Sisters became symbols of the age, and LAKEVIEW was writ large on the outside of the facility, dirtying its name across the province.

Then, as if it were all a dream, your government put the boots to coal-fired plants. On June 12, 2007, the walls (and the sisters) came tumbling down in a controlled explosion. Thanks, Mr. McGuinty for a promise kept. Thanks for shedding us of this major eyesore.

News directors at TV stations across North America ran the Lakeview footage. The implosion made great TV – in high def, and slo-mo. But to me, and other Lakeview residents, it symbolized something much more significant – like the fall of the Berlin Wall did to commie haters.

It was a deep and emotional cleansing.

It signalled the end of the industrial age. An end to the stupidity of ignoring our sensitive eco-systems. An end to making backroom political deals that impacted on thousands of innocent families for over 50 years. Lakeview got its lake back.

But.... There's always a but when it comes to Lakeview. There's talk of another gas-fired power plant there. Mayor McCallion made some noise about it a while back, and said it would attract more tax dollars to the city's coffers. You can't blame Hazel. She's old school. She grew up during the industrial age. When she rammed through a pro-development mandate while in office, she wasn't looking far enough down the road.

In the early stages, the city lived a charmed life. Then it started to choke on its excess. Hazel was dubbed the Queen of Sprawl. Monochromatic housing developments s-p-r-e-a-d throughout the city like lichen on a rock. It was a city built for the car. You needed one to get anywhere.

But hey, everyone was caught up in the frenzy. Progress or die, became the mantra.

Then it all came to a screeching halt. Our streets were plugged to the nines. The financial costs of low-level development hit home in the need for more infrastructure.

Hazel has bellyached to the feds that they should pay to rebuild the crumbling bridges and roads, and they've told her to look in the mirror. She then became a born-again advocate for intensification. She was a huge supporter of your Places to Grow legislation.

There's been a vast shaking of collective soul here in Mississauga over the past year as the City looks inward, and tries to redo the old model. They've implemented some of the principles of Placemaking, and talked about building a Light Rapid Transit line up Highway 10. But the mess created is deep and maybe unfixable. The ad hoc development schemes that some have proposed for the Lakeview lands lack both vision and purpose. Putting in another power plant should be a definite no-no.

Do our leaders really understand that the Lakeview lands can change the very aesthetic vocabulary of the city?

Former Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray gets it. He spoke recently at the "Conversation About Building A City For The 21st Century" and said development of the Lakeview lands could propel Mississauga into the 21st century and beyond. What an opportunity, he exclaimed. The chance to build a liveable core on pristine waterfront!

Will our mayor and council recognize this as the last best opportunity for our city? Will they work with your government, the industrial landowners, and local residents to fix what needs fixing?

I'm not holding my breath. After all, I'm from Lakeview.

This is a rare opportunity to solve our urban angst. This project could and should be the most dynamic in Canada, maybe North America. It's the first time government has control over how a project of this scope will look and feel. It could be a poster child for the Places to Grow initiative. Ontario Power Generation (OPG) would have a crucial role to play in doing the right thing.

When you talk about the need to place 40,000 new university students over the next few years, why not build the school on the Lakeview lands? Want to begin the process of relieving gridlock? How about using the four docks (left over by the power plant) to start a boat rapid transit (BRT) shuttle from Lakeview (Mississauga) to Toronto? It's way past time we thought outside the box.

The Lakeview residents don't want to see a Condo Alley built there, like we have on the Lakeshore leading into Toronto, or those eye-popping projects around our own City Hall.

They want graduated development off the Lakeshore, that celebrates the land, sky, and lake. They're not anti-development, but pro-smart growth. Why not reconnect the streetcar line that used to connect Lakeview to its eastern neighbours in Toronto?

If we show some political will, anything's possible. These Lakeview proposals are coming from the bottom up. The residents are smart, engaged, and willing to invest in their community. I wish you could pick the brain of Jim Tovey, president of Lakeview Ratepayers, or his colleague, Prof. John Danahy, a U of T urban designer. They haven't lost faith in the system – yet. They recognize that Lakeview can take its rightful place in the future of our city and province if we just jettison our industrial age attitudes.

The last three generations in Lakeview groaned in the shadow of an ill-placed power plant. Surprisingly, the coal dust didn't blacken their view of the world.

It's Lakeview's time for clean land, clean air, and a clean new development. And it's way past time you helped clean up our name.

To put it bluntly, Mr. Premier, the province of Ontario owes us one. If you don't act, that dusty old philosopher will have to add one more book to his 500 volumes on human folly. I eagerly await your reply.

rdrennan@mississauga.net

## What are the implications of the oil crisis?

The advent of 2008 saw the price of crude cross the figure \$100-a-barrel threshold, and then retreated slightly. Many experts opine that it will go up, and then down, and then maybe up again. That, anyway, has been the pattern of the last several years of volatile prices.

The booming economies of China and India are hungry for energy. Oil fields in Mexico, the United States and several other oil producers are drying up, tightening world supplies. President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela is using oil as a political weapon. Rebels in Nigeria are creating havoc in some of Africa's most productive oil fields. The war in Iraq rages on. The dollar is weakening, causing hedge funds and traders to flee to oil and other commodities as a safe haven. But all those factors were in play last summer when the price fell to about \$60 a barrel, before it rallied at the end of the year.

At the moment, the oil prices growth is connected not so much with the current crude oil reserves in the USA, as with the geopolitical situation. Despite the decline

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in the U.S. reserves of crude oil, the gap between the crude oil prices in the world

and the USA is getting wider, but the petrol prices are not growing so far due to insignificant increase.

It would be logical to expect a certain decline in prices, but the latest geopolitical events across the globe, specifically the Nigerian situation, threat of the Turkish army invasion to Iraq, and the situation in Pakistan, lead to oil prices increasing. In the spot market the current price for oil is by \$3 less than in the futures.

Usually, when this happens, the oil prices do not go up, as it is more convenient for the companies to sell futures for two months and fix their profits, than to depend upon the market situation. However, the geopolitical factors entered the game, which have a very significant impact on the oil market.

Till recently the rise in oil prices did not make an appreciable impact on the North American economy. The effect was just marginal but the rapid oil price, in conjunction with the housing market slump and credit squeeze, could tip the economy into a recession. Cont. on page 35