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NEWS

Re-open Hastings Drive to development: property owners

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By Monte Sonnenberg

Sun Media

Norfolk is sitting on a gold mine in Long Point, but there is skepticism that the county will ever cash in on it.

Of the 149 building lots on Hastings Drive, 50 belong to the county.

Norfolk council heard last week that the land could be worth as much as \$6 million if the resort residential designation the area once enjoyed were restored.

The Long Point Region Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources rezoned Hastings Drive as hazard land 25 years ago after two devastating storms destroyed dozens of cottages along the Long Point shoreline.

"I think Norfolk County is sitting on a huge resource," said Randy Mawhiney, owner of a lot on Hastings Drive. "I'm sure a lot of people are wondering why Norfolk County is not going after the LPRCA and the provincial government to have these lands rezoned."

Mawhiney also asked why cottage owners in Ontario don't get a chance to rebuild when owners of resort properties in the American south are allowed to rebuild repeatedly with each passing hurricane season.

Mark Mawhiney, also an owner of land in Long Point, said Norfolk council should lobby for change. Mawhiney said the circumstances that came together to produce the 1985 storms are unlikely to be repeated.

The north Erie shore line was buffeted by two powerful storms that year -- one April 5 and the other Dec. 22 -- at a time of record-high lake levels. Numerous cottages in Long Point -- not just on Hastings Drive -- were washed off their foundations. Council was told that the cottages that were damaged were flimsy shacks not designed to withstand any kind of weather.

Mark Mawhiney said Great Lakes managers on both sides of the border have paid greater attention to regulating lake levels since the 1985 storms. He said inflow to Lake Erie is managed at Lake Superior while outflow is managed at the Niagara River. Lake Erie, he said, will never again rise to dangerous levels.

Mark Mawhiney added that 20 cottages on Hastings Drive came through the 1985 storms unscathed. That, he said, was because they were built to a higher standard than neighbouring properties.

Howard Jerome, a landscape architect and property owner in Long Point for 15 years, also pointed out that shoreline protection technology has vastly improved since 1985.

"It's phenomenal what it can do," he said. "It's used all around the world. But I don't see here that it has been looked into."

Norfolk council fielded the remarks during a discussion of the county's secondary plan for the Lakeshore Special Policy Area. The plan, which is nearly ready for inclusion in the county official plan, has been three years in the making.

Windham Coun. Jim Oliver doubts that Norfolk or the LPRCA on their own could roll back the hazard land designation on Hastings Drive. Oliver said the MNR would likely receive numerous requests from other lakeshore municipalities for similar treatment if change were granted in Long Point. To avoid that, Oliver said the MNR would likely have to conduct a formal review of its lakeshore hazard land policies before considering requests for specific changes.

Langton Coun. Roger Geysens, a long-time member of the LPRCA, suggested that would be a hopeless quest.

"The technology probably exists to rebuild those cottages," he said. "But I don't think we have a prayer of getting past the province on that."

This Week's Flyers

The image displays three promotional flyers side-by-side. The first flyer on the left is for Princess Auto, featuring a blue and white design with the text 'PRINCESS AUTO Make it Work' and 'HAUL AWAY SOME DEALS'. It advertises a sale starting on Tuesday, November 14, ending November 18, 2017, with various products like a 6,000 lb 12V DC motor and a truck bed extender. The second flyer in the middle is for Pusateri's, with a yellow and white design, advertising a 'gift with purchase' of a pepper spread and a 'HOT BUY' of a 6,000 lb 12V DC motor. The third flyer on the right is for Leon's, with a black and white design, advertising a 'BLACK FRIDAY SALE' with 70% off on select items, including a sofa and a mattress.