

Ecological Gifts: Donor Profile

Lorne and Rhoda Almack

A Conservation Easement on the Oak Ridges Moraine



John Mitchell

Canadian Wildlife Service

“Landowners should pass natural capital on to the next generation. If the government makes it easy to get a tax break, all society benefits – everyone wins. But more importantly, for the rest of our lives we can view this beautiful part of Ontario’s landscape and observe the wildlife, knowing that it is protected forever.”

LORNE ALMACK

The view from Lorne and Rhoda Almack’s picture window is of the clear waters of Mitchell Creek. Across the creek, a dense, cedar clad slope rises up to meet green pasture land. Their 34 hectare property sits at the southern edge of the Oak Ridges Moraine, a landscape of rolling hills, farms and woodland that is the headwaters of numerous streams and rivers.

Just 10 kilometres south of the pasture is the expanding edge of Greater Toronto. Lorne and Rhoda have worked hard to preserve this landscape. Lorne is a founding member of the Green Door Alliance, a local conservation group seeking to preserve the countryside northeast of Toronto. He also promotes conservation easements among his neighbours.

The Almack’s provided an excellent example when they decided to take direct action to provide long-term protection for their own land through an

ecological gift of a conservation easement to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). In Lorne’s words: “After lobbying for conservation and opposing development for 30 years, it was appropriate to put my property where my mouth was.”

The Almack’s continue to use their house and property as they have for the past 40 years. They maintain a small farm, pasture cattle and are allowed to maintain and expand their home within a defined zone. However, under the terms of the easement – registered on title for a term of 999 years – the natural features must be protected.



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Conservation easements are legal agreements registered on the title of the land. Covenants in the agreement dictate allowed land-uses and activities. The easement holder, in this case the FON, has a right and obligation to inspect the property and enforce the covenants. The landowner retains title to the land.

“The easement allowed me to do what I wanted to do in terms of allowed uses,” Lorne explains. “If someone else wants to buy the property, they can keep some horses and pursue some farming but cannot develop the land – no housing, golf courses or severances.”

By donating an ecological gift, the Almack’s helped nature and impeded urban sprawl. They also received a charitable donation receipt for the fair market value of their donation, which will reduce their income tax for the next five years.

To find out more about making an ecological gift or about conservation easements, contact:

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