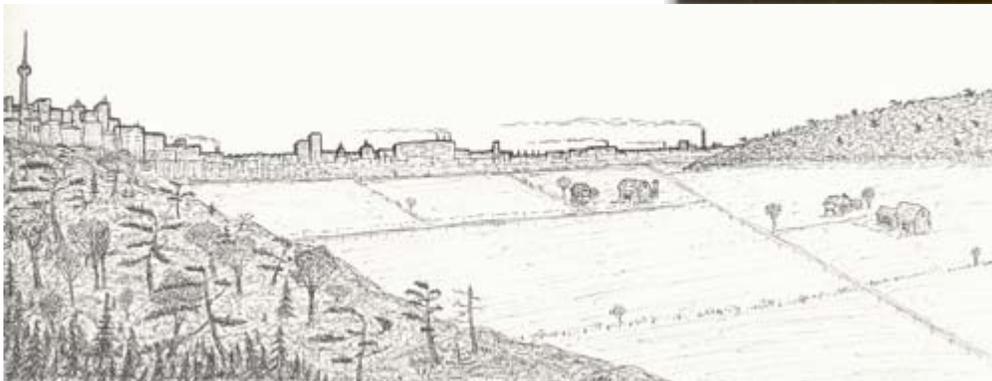




ALGONQUIN ECO WATCH GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Why, may you ask, such concern over a part of Ontario that is as yet relatively undeveloped, a large portion of which is already secure within the boundaries of Algonquin Park? Hopefully the following paragraphs will convince you that while superficially at least all is well on the Algonquin Dome, many factors are at work which if allowed to continue unchecked, will eventually lead to the degradation of the Algonquin ecosystem.

Degradation of an ecosystem may occur in many ways, some obvious and some far more subtle. Bulldozing of forest cover for cottage development can not only remove wildlife habitat, but may lead to shoreline erosion, ultimately destroying fisheries habitat as well. Strict guidelines for leasehold cottagers in Algonquin Park generally ensure that this type of obvious degradation will not occur. But what of the more subtle types of cumulative degradation, such as that caused by caustic airborne sulphur compounds drifting from the Sudbury Basin over the Algonquin Dome on prevailing northwest winds.



Above is a line drawing depicting increasing urbanization. As Ontario's human population continues its rapid growth, greater stress will be placed on natural ecosystems. If normal species interactions are compromised, as a result of increasing human presence or habitat changes, irreversible imbalances may be expected. The loss of a species may indeed go unnoticed by those who were not aware of its existence. This in no way lessens the importance of that species.



The development of any facilities, be they permanent or temporary, always affects an ecosystem. While minor developments such as the creation of a new hiking trail or the improvement of a remote portage may not be considered significant, collectively through time, subtle, almost immeasurable impacts will have occurred and may be irreversible.

The impacts of such major changes as the development of rail lines, highways, hydro lines or the research facility at Lake Traverse in Algonquin Park are, on the other hand, more easily measured and dealt with. As such developments are decommissioned however, careful thought must be given to the future of remaining facilities such as buildings, to establish whether or not their retention is consistent with the long term goals of a natural environment park and is in the best interests of the ecosystem.



It is obvious that there are many problems facing the future of the Algonquin Ecosystem. It is important for us to recognize and identify present and future issues so that all concerned parties may work together in a constructive manner for the ultimate well-being of this precious Ontario resource.