

Opinion: No winners in hydro struggle District Health Council centre of controversy

From the Orangeville Citizen
The long, frustrating battle between Ontario Hydro and landowners in the path of the proposed Bruce-Milton transmission line seems to be heating up long after most people figured it was over.

A court action launched by the Grey County Corridor Committee during the spring, and seemingly abandoned after some hush-hush meetings on the eve of the provincial election, now is on again, and a similar action is being launched by East Garafraxa Township and about 60 residents of Dufferin and Wellington.

Both actions seek injunctions declaring an expropriation approval by Energy Minister James Taylor null and void.

Backing up the injunction and applications are a series of county court actions designed to prevent Hydro entering on the lands in question, at least until such time as the Divisional Court rules on the matter. One such bid has already been successful in Guelph.

Farther south, hearings under the Expropriations Act resumed in Acton after a series of delays over nine months.

These hearings, before Toronto lawyer Donald Meyrick, are into the question of whether the proposed taking of land is "fair, sound and reasonably necessary" in the attainment of Hydro's objectives.

These hearings technically deal only with the portion of the proposed 500-kilovolt line through Halton Hills. However, the real battle going on during them is over the matter of alternative routes for the entire corridor.

"This particular line happens to be the only one of its type built in the 1970s without a prior public inquiry similar to the one conducted by Dr. Omand Solandt for the 500-kv line between Nanticoke and Pickering.

Four years now, citizen bodies like the Grey County Corridor Committee and the Interested Citizens Group have been campaigning relentlessly but unsuccessfully for some kind of independent inquiry which would determine whether the Bruce-Milton route is the best available to Hydro.

Over the years, the interest groups have been supplied with a lot of information that has prompted conclusions that politics, rather than economics or technicalities, produced the Bruce-Milton route.

One of the documents produced by Hydro included material prepared for Dr. Solandt which showed that, in the early 1970s, Hydro looked at eight schematic ways of getting the Bruce power to markets, none of which involved simply a double-circuit line between Bruce and

Milton. Most of the options involved a line to Kitchener which would feed power through the Nanticoke-Pickering line; several delivered the power to a point north, rather than west, of Metro Toronto.

The only system favored by Hydro which had a Bruce-Milton line also had a line to Kitchener.

This system happened to be the one favored marginally by Hydro. It was adopted by the Government in 1974, but the Kitchener "loop" was postponed indefinitely, apparently because the Government feared strong local opposition from farm groups in Waterloo County.

We think the truth of the matter is that the Bruce-Milton corridor was chosen simply because the Government and Hydro figured there wouldn't be much opposition to it.

Time has certainly proven otherwise, and presumably all concerned now wish there had been an alternative-routes inquiry when one was first demanded.

But what now? Is there really any point in the battle being pursued?

We suspect no one really believes the corridor proposal will be abandoned. Not this late, with the Bruce station rapidly nearing completion.

At most, all that can come of a continued confrontation in the courts is a demonstration of a failure to look seriously at a lot of potential alternative routes. The land will still eventually be taken and the big power line will be built.

It will truly be a battle in which there'll be no winners.

Hydro has already lost in the sense that the construction program is at least a year behind schedule.

The property owners have lost, in that their lands will be used.

And we all have lost incredibly, in that the long delays in building the line will inevitably trap enormous amounts of generating capacity at Bruce. The power that can't get out will have to be generated elsewhere with precious fossil fuels, at a cost of up to \$1-million a day (if the line isn't finished and in service by early 1979).

We hope against hope that a way will be found of turning the Meyrick hearings into the sort of study of alternatives the line's opponents want.

Our hunch is that some honest (public) admissions by Hydro and the Government would go a long way to securing the support of the landowners in having work on the line expedited.

Halton District Health Council entered its second year of operations amid a flurry of criticisms from some regional councillors.

Health Council Chairman Terrence Baines refuted charges that the council was in conflict with Halton Regional Board of Health.

"I don't think there's a conflict," he said. "The Board of Health administers the Public Health Unit and the Public Health Act. It's like a hospital board."

"We don't do any administering of anything. Ours is a planning and advisory function."

"We don't pass out funds — we have no funds to pass out."

Asked to whom the health council was accountable Mr. Baines replied, "In all its ramifications, that's a dirty question. I don't know to whom we are accountable."

"I'd like to think we're autonomous. We're almost accountable to our own consciences."

"I don't think we're answerable or accountable to the ministry to any greater degree than a hospital is."

On its part the health council is concerned about the kind of clout it will have with the ministry.

"We're concerned about end runs," Mr. Baines said. If the ministry approves an agency's proposal after the health council has turned it

down, that will be the end of the health council, he said.

Mr. Baines said he was confident the health councils would serve the purpose for which they were intended.

"Like anything else that's new, it worries people," he commented.

Acton Councillor Garnet McKenzie is one councillor who strongly favors the health council.

"The budget for health will strangle the province if something isn't done," he said.

Mr. McKenzie said he was optimistic the health councils will be successful, equalizing

health services and cutting out duplications. "We've got to give them a chance to prove themselves," he said.

"What we had in the past was not right."

Mr. McKenzie was one of regional council's representatives on the health council but resigned because his workload didn't permit him to devote sufficient time to the health council.

Oakville Councillor Ron Plonche said the health council becomes a buffer between the ministry and the region.



A ROSE BY ANY other name. Unfortunately the Free Press cannot reproduce photos in color, but this photo by D.J. Towler is still beautiful in black and white. The picture won first place in the color category in the photo contest at the fall fair.

Our readers write

McKenzie writes McKeough

The following letter was written by regional councillor G. W. McKenzie to Ontario Minister of Treasury and Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs Darcy McKeough.

September 7, 1977

The Honourable W. Darcy McKeough
Treasurer of Ontario
Ministry of Treasury Economics
and Intergovernmental Affairs
Frost Building South, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear Mr. McKeough:

Recently, a Citizens' Committee from Ward I in Halton Hills, formerly the Town of Acton, made a presentation to a Committee of Regional Council studying Bill 151, requesting that consideration be given to creating a fifth town within the Region of Halton, comprising parts of the former Townships of Esqueving and Nassagaweya and the former Town of Acton. Since this Committee plans to make a presentation to you, if it has not already done so, I would like to acquaint you with a few facts.

When this term is over, I will have served twelve years as Councillor, Deputy Reeve and Reeve of Acton, and Regional Councillor, so I am fully aware of the "pros" and "cons" of Regional Government.

Let me say that I support the concept and have worked to make Halton Hills and the Region function successfully.

Prior to Regional Government, the Town of Acton could not afford a planner or an engineer, and was experiencing financial difficulties. It was only by selling some town-owned land in 1973 that we were able to bring down an acceptable budget. The Councillors of the former Town of Acton supported a three-town concept for Halton (Burlington, Oakville and North Halton) but I see nothing seriously wrong with the final decision. Halton Hills is a viable unit, with an assessment base large enough to meet the needs of the people in a reasonable and responsible manner. In the past three years, we have:

1. Set responsible mill rates which I invite your staff to review.
2. Maintained a low debenture debt (\$2.00 per capita for general purpose. This has only been possible by paying for many capital expenditures from our current operating budget.
3. Worked diligently toward an Official Plan for Halton Hills which should be approved in 1978.
4. Spent many meetings reviewing the by-laws and agreements of the three former municipalities in Halton Hills, and re-writing or amending same for our new town.
5. Developed a plan for up-dating urban and rural roads to be paid for out of our current operating budgets.
6. United our volunteer Fire Departments under one Chief, and up-dated their equipment and facilities.
7. United the Public Works Department under one roof in the Esqueving area, and enlarged the property and buildings to accommodate them.

8. Spent considerable funds in Recreation to provide two new swimming pools, rebuilt two old arenas and built a new one, which operates twelve months of the year, built many tennis courts and improved our parks and playing areas.

9. Acquired excellent department heads to plan and control our growth and operate Halton Hills in a very business-like manner.

Our most urgent need, at the present time, is an Administrative Building to bring the administrative staff for all departments together under one roof. Inflation and building costs prevent us from accomplishing this goal, at this time.

To take a backward step now and create a fifth town, comprising the former Town of Acton, which only pays 20 per cent of a mill in Halton Hills, and the low assessment areas of Esqueving and Nassagaweya with their extensive rural roads, demanding upkeep and repairs, would be, in my opinion, utterly unrealistic. To accomplish this, I'm sure the Provincial Government would be expected to pay:

- (a) the transition costs, and
- (b) large subsidies for the next ten years to keep the tax rate at an acceptable level.

The local press and the people criticizing the Town of Halton Hills accept the Regional School Board concept where we share one representative with Esqueving Township.

The three local Councillors - Les Duby, Peter Marks and myself spent many hours with this Committee and tried to explain the many advantages of being part of Halton Hills, but unfortunately, we were not successful.

This Committee feels that Acton has lost its identity. If that is true, the same can be said for Esqueving and Georgetown. It also feels that three Councillors is not sufficient representation on Council, and yet when you consider representation by population, we are very favourably represented.

The Committee contends that the Georgetown Councillors control our development. The Councillors in Ward III and IV have never voted in a block, and even if they did, they could not control Council.

It mentions the poor condition of our town hall when, honestly, for the past twenty years, it has been crumbling due to lack of interest and funds to repair it.

Before you respond to this Committee's proposal, may I invite your staff to contact our department heads and review the budgets and mill rates in Halton Hills, and assess the financial status and progress of the new town.

As a Councillor who has worked very hard to establish Regional Government in Halton Hills, I would be very interested in your findings and would appreciate knowing where the Council could be more responsible to the entire area.

Yours very truly,
G.W. "Pat" McKenzie,
Regional Councillor, Ward I,
Halton Hills.

c.c. to The Honourable James W. Snow
The Honourable G.A. Kerr, Q.C.
Mayor T.J. Hill
Regional Chairman R.B. Morrow

Metric — it's worth the change

Metric — measure for measure, it's a better way to measure

Metric — 98% of the world knows it — so it must be easy..

NOTICE

Commencing Monday, October 3rd, 1977, the Town of Halton Hills will revert to **Once a Week Refuse Pick Up**, as in previous years.

THANK YOU
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l means litre
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