

## The more input, easier to approve official plan

The meeting at Gordon Mcott Memorial Arena to discuss the Halton draft official plan Thursday was meeting number 36, and Milton Mayor Don Gordon said he would like to see the number rounded off to an even 40.

"The more meetings we have, and the more public input we receive, the fewer the objections will be when the plan is finally implemented," he said.

"In Waterloo Region, they held 56 public meetings to discuss the plan, and they've only had two objections since the plan was implemented."

Planning director Ed Cumming, called the official plan "a policies plan", and said it includes a description of all the things the region considers important.

Once the series of public meetings is concluded, and the area municipalities have had their say, regional council must pass the plan. From there, it will be sent to the Ministry of Housing for final approval and implementation.

Mr. Cumming said many of the people attending the meetings are concerned that the official plan will produce another level bureaucracy to be dealt with.

"We'd like to remind the average citizen that the front line to be dealt with will still be the local municipality", he said. "It doesn't mean you'll have to go to the region for everything you want."

Rural development is one of the major concerns of the region, Mr. Cumming said. One of the questions the region must answer is "What are the conditions that should exist in rural areas before housing is added?" he said.

"Generally, the settlement policies are aimed at keeping the rural areas rural," Mr. Cumming said.

The official plan sets out a number of guidelines in a general way, and leaves the specifics to the local municipalities. For example, the population goals for the years 1986 and 2001 have been set, but the plan doesn't set out the required growth from year to year, or the phasing of the growth.

The guidelines for employment have been set out in a general way in the plan, Mr. Cumming said. But the region and the municipality will work in a partnership outside the plan to develop businesses.

In the same way, responsibility for the annual housing targets are a joint region-municipality responsibility, but the phasing schedule is a responsibility of the local municipality.

Agricultural and rural problems dominated the question and answer part of the meeting, with much concern being expressed about the restrictions on farmland. Many of the people attending public meetings have expressed concern about the designation "foodlands," and how much restriction it will place on their land.

"The local plans will set aside foodlands which would be subject to a higher level of restrictions," Mr. Cumming said.

Jack Martin, who has a farm north of Halton Hills, questioned the necessity for limiting farmers in obtaining lot separations.

"In Brampton they allow two severances per 100 acres. Caledon in its wisdom has increased the number of separations from 2 to 3 per 100 acres," he said. "Here in Halton when a farmer retires

if his chief source of income hasn't been from the farm he can't keep an acre of his farm to retire on."

"Another comment I want to make is to warn people they shouldn't think of this plan as a permanent thing, even if it goes through as it is," Mr. Martin said. "Change is what it's all about, and things put down as green space and open space won't necessarily stay that way."

"If we'd had this official plan when the Pilgrims came, they would have turned around and gone back, because they wouldn't have been able to cut down any trees to build a house," he said.

"The people must stop and think about the things they're asking you to do," Mr. Martin concluded. "They must consider the cost, because it may be too high."

Stan Muir of Georgetown complimented Mr. Cumming on the maintaining of open space in the plan.

"One of the nice features of this area are the open spaces," he said. "I like the plan for the environmentally sensitive areas, the open spaces and the hazard lands."

"The rural area has a rural character, and we want to maintain it, that way," Mr. Cumming said.

Jim Reid of Georgetown said

he objects to the restrictions on second homes being built on farms for farm help.

"Our farm help should live in as good a home as anyone else," he said.

Mr. Cumming said that if the farmer shows that a farm laborer is necessary on a year-round basis, then the restrictions don't apply. The restrictions cover seasonal help.

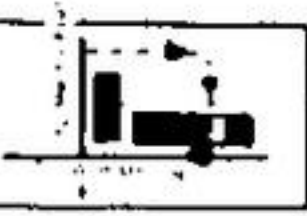
"You can build a home for your son and daughter or hired hand without a lot separation," Mayor Gordon said. "We did that three times in Milton last year, and it only took six weeks

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