



IN FIRST VOTE

Ward 1 regional councillor Ed Wood takes part in his first vote at last Wednesday's inaugural Halton regional council meeting.

Energy Minister Auld says no hydro study

Ontario energy minister James Auld has chosen to follow the examples of his predecessors - former minister Darcy McKeough, Dennis Timbrell and Reuben Baetz - in denying a request by municipal authorities to have an independent study conducted on Ontario Hydro's Bruce to Milton transmission corridor.

In a letter to Halton regional council released this week, Mr. Auld reaffirms the provincial government's contention that the route for the 500,000-volt corridor through Halton has been adequately examined. In response to a request from retiring regional chairman Ric Morrow, Mr. Auld declined to use the short time remaining before an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing into the matter commences Jan. 2 to launch an independent study.

"It would be most inappropriate to re-open the matter at this time," Mr. Auld stated in his letter to Mr. Morrow and regional council. "The best we can take now is to work together to ensure that the line is built with minimum impact to the property owners."

RESOLUTION RESPONSE

Mr. Auld was responding to both a formal resolution forwarded to Queen's Park by council in late October and to a more personal letter from Mr. Morrow which outlined in detail some of the background of the contentious corridor issue, the problems it poses for Halton landowners and particularly Halton Hills citizens and the reasons why he feels an independent study of the corridor route should still be granted.

The OMB hearing scheduled to begin in Halton Hills Jan. 2 will examine Ontario Hydro's application for an amendment to the town's official plan and zoning bylaw that would allow construction of the corridor through the municipality's fifth concession. The Halton Hills official plan clause that requires individual amendments for the installation of utilities has become the most substantial obstacle in Hydro's plans for the multi-million dollar project.

Both Halton Hills and Halton regional councils have refused to endorse the amendment application. Hydro towers for the corridor have been erected from the line's two ends - at the Milton switching station and the Bruce nuclear generating station on Lake Huron - to the

north and south borders of Halton Hills, awaiting the corridor's approval.

MAIN REASONS

In his letter to the ministry of energy, written on regional council's behalf, Mr. Morrow listed the main reasons behind the two municipalities' refusal to grant the necessary amendments.

"Better alternatives for power transmission from Bruce exist than that proposed by Ontario Hydro," Mr. Morrow stated, referring specifically to a suggested alternative line from Bruce to Essa, near Barrie, which corridor opponents contend could perform the same function as the Bruce to Milton route with less social and environmental impact.

"Even if it has been determined that the transmission corridor has to be brought to Milton, then there is still a better alternative route available through the region of Halton, i.e. from Kitchener along the Highway 401 corridor to the Milton substation, twinning the present Nanticoke to Pickering line, thus avoiding disturbance of the beautiful agricultural setting of the rural area of Halton Hills and unnecessary environmental blight."

Mr. Morrow went on to say that the section of the corridor route through Halton Hills should warrant the same type of special hearing as was conducted by the Environmental Hearing Board on the section running north from Halton Hills to a point near Bruce.

"It is the desire of regional council that you appoint a Commission of Inquiry, or some other independent person, to carry out a detailed independent study," Mr. Morrow told Mr. Auld.

Mr. Morrow anticipated at least one of the energy minister's arguments when he pointed out that the report of the Solandt Commission on the corridor did not include within its terms of reference the section of the route now being debated. Mr. Auld nevertheless alluded to the Solandt report as final expert authority in his subsequent response.

AULD NOTED

Mr. Auld noted that Darcy McKeough, who was energy minister when the corridor route was initially chosen in 1973, based his selection on the Solandt Commission's findings, which has since been repeatedly challenged by cor-

ridor opponents. Mr. Auld himself expressed satisfaction with the "full expropriation inquiry" that took place last year and reported that the titles to all properties necessary for the corridor "are now vested with Ontario Hydro".

He cited "a need to complete the line to Milton station to enhance the reliability of the Hydro transmission system."

"The proper north-south route was not part of the original terms of reference of the Solandt Commission," Mr. Morrow had reminded Mr. Auld however. "I was therefore simply an adjunct to a very broad study. Secondly, the option chosen by BHI, the environmental group appointed by the government to assist Solandt, was not finally chosen by Solandt; if the BHI-preferred option for north-south had been chosen then the Halton Hills route would not be the one pursued."

"Finally, electrical demand and consumption has changed since Solandt did his report."

Mr. Morrow further said that the findings of Slater Energy Consultants Inc., which was commissioned by Queen's Park to re-examine some aspects of the corridor controversy, ultimately conflicted with Ontario Hydro's and the government's basic intentions. The Slater report called the Halton Hills route the worst of three alternatives its authors had reviewed, from financial and environmental points of view.

PENDING OUTCOME

"I note that the OMB hearing has been scheduled for early January," Mr. Morrow wrote, "but I am also informed that an application for prohibition to prevent the OMB from hearing the matter has already been filed by the town of Halton Hills. Further, motions will be brought to the OMB to adjourn the hearing pending the outcome in the courts of the application for prohibition."

"Even if the hearing goes on as scheduled, the decision finally made by the OMB will probably be petitioned to the Cabinet and/or matters may be taken to the courts. Thus, timing-wise, there still could be a great time period before this official plan and zoning bylaw matter is finalized."

Mr. Morrow reiterated the promise of all corridor opponents to abide by whatever decision is rendered by an independent commission.

Force Electric
to be a small plaza?

A proposal by an Acton property owner that would see the former Force Electric Company plant at Mill and Fellows Streets converted into a small retail plaza with residential apartments on the upper floor was presented to the town planning board last Tuesday night.

Art Gordon, who owns the downtown Acton property, outlined plans for the extensive renovation of the industrial plant and applied for an amendment to the official plan and zoning bylaw for the former town of Acton that would allow him to use the site for commercial and residential

purposes. The proposal calls for the site, bounded by Mill, Fellows, Church and Eastern Streets, to be cleared. An 8,000-square-foot commercial centre, suitable for about eight individual stores, would then be erected, and provisions made for several one-bedroom apartments to be situated on the upper floor.

Deputy planning director Brian Kropp commented after an initial examination of the proposal that some minor changes would have to be made to meet planning department standards. He estimated that the department's report

on the proposal, which was requested by the board last week, should be completed in late winter or early spring.

Mr. Kropp told The Herald that Mr. Gordon is the new owner of the factory site, which was the subject of another re-development proposal in 1976. The previous owner's plans, however, were tabled until the town's new official plan could be completed.

Because Mr. Gordon has presented "a more definite proposal," he said, it will be possible for the department to review his plans in conjunction with its work on the official plan.

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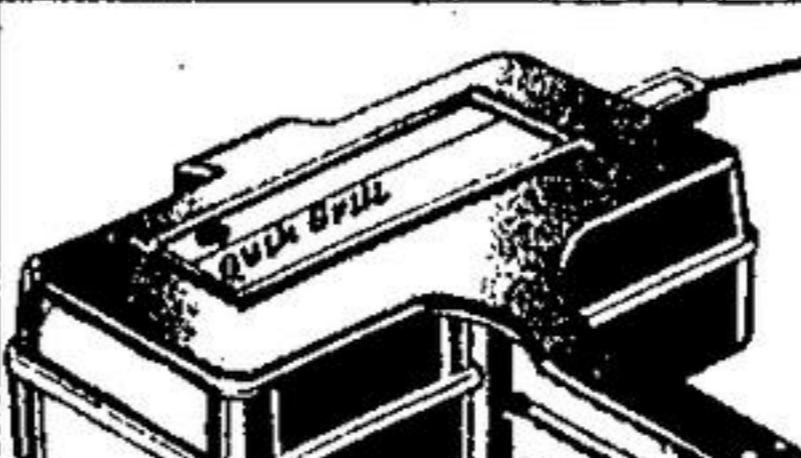
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