

Corporate tree cutting brings regional council apology

Amid inter-governmental discussions regarding the protection of trees and woodlots, Halton regional council has expressed "profound regret" over the removal of trees from two Oakville locations designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs).

Shell Canada Ltd. and Bayshire Investments Ltd. were named in a resolution approved by council last Wednesday as the responsible parties in a recent tree cutting incident which has angered Burlington and Oakville residents.

Council formally apologized to the owners of lands known as the Bronte-Burloak Woods and the Iroquois Shoreline Woods for allowing the two companies to cut and otherwise destroy trees in the ESAs. Council's resolution expressed its expectation that there will be "co-operation and communication" in the future over such operations.

HIGH QUALITY

Included among the 38 ESAs examined and defined by Halton's Environmental and Ecological Advisory Committee (EEAC) last year, the two Oakville woodlots have been noted for their high quality and biological importance.

The tree cutting incidents drew criticism and concern from both the region's own EEAC and two Burlington environmental groups. After visiting the Bronte-Burloak Woods ESA, members of the EEAC were told by Shell Canada officials that ash, pine and oak trees which were among the oldest in Halton had been removed as part of a woodlot management program.

The trees had first been selected and marked by employees of the provincial ministry of natural resources and then cut by licensed tradesmen.

TREES CUT

At the Iroquois Shoreline Woods ESA, 500 trees, mostly

oak, were cut by employees of Bayshire Investments. Oakville city council ordered the company to stop removing the trees after the cutting was reported by the town's Arborists organization.

"Both these incidents prove the need for an improved tree bylaw in order to control tree cutting," the members of EEAC stated in the minutes of their meeting.

One member commented that, by removing "the oldest deciduous stand in Halton," Shell has eliminated the main reason why Bronte-Burloak was designated an ESA. The EEAC has invited a ministry official to discuss his interpretation of forest management policies.

The Garden Club of Burlington expressed its "considerable dismay" over the "desecration of the ESAs... in the long-range business interests of Shell Oil and Bayshire Investments".

The Burlington Horticultural Society similarly expressed "deep regret" over the two incidents and joined the Garden Club and the EEAC in urging regional council to strengthen its official plan policies and formulate a firm tree protection bylaw which would prevent such incidents from occurring again.

A recommendation prepared by the region's planning committee in response to the criticism expressed the reg-

ion's "hope for improved co-operation and communication", but when it came before council last week, Oakville Coun. Terry Mannell had some alterations in mind.

CHANGE WORDING

At Coun. Mannell's suggestion, the recommendation's wording was changed so that the region was expressing its "expectation", rather than just "hope" that there will be "co-operation", rather than "improved co-operation".

"We just do not want these type of activities going on in our ESAs, and we have to let them know it," Coun. Mannell said, complaining that the committee's original recommendation was "too passive".

Planning committee chairman Roy Booth of Halton Hills pointed out that Coun. Mannell had already persuaded the committee to "temper" its recommendation so that it constituted a "reasonable" request. He called the recommendation "politicking," however, since it comes after the damage had been done and would serve no real purpose.

Oakville Coun. Carol Gooding referred to a letter which indicated that Bayshire Investments had no knowledge of the tree cutting. She suggested that council's resolution should be altered to reflect the company's apparent innocence in the matter.

Coun. Laurie Mannell, also of Oakville, called the suggest-

ion "utter, total garbage" and claimed to have been in the company of Bayshire officials when the tree cutting program was openly discussed. He commented that council should have its solicitor investigate the feasibility of taking legal action against the company.

Coun. Booth maintained that the recommendation was blowing the problem out of proportion and urged council to "forget about admonishing anyone or stepping on any corporate toes".

TREE INCIDENTS

The discussion about the tree cutting incidents came at the same time regional staff were seeking council permission to make specific recommendations to the provincial government concerning forthcoming revisions in Ontario's Trees Act.

An amendment to the Act was scheduled to be considered in the Legislature last week, but region officials discovered that the proposed changes might hamper Halton's efforts to strengthen its tree protection bylaw, a document which has already been revised several times.

Among the changes suggested by regional staff are the redefinition of figures used in the Act, the redefinition of the term "woodlot" and the authorization for the region to make exceptions in cases where landowners wish to cut trees on their properties.



FUNDS FOR WOMEN

Janice Kron (left) was on hand at the Speyside Highland Games Saturday on behalf of Halton Women's Place the planned temporary shelter for women in need of emergency lodging. Ms. Kron accepts a check from Knox Presbyter-

ian Church in Georgetown who donated profits from sales at their food booth at the games. Lillian Clayton (centre) and Roger Fisher represented the church at the presentation. (Herald photo)

Officials to discuss contract

The Halton Regional Police Association and the police commission are meeting today to continue negotiations for next year's contract, but if all the details are not resolved at this meeting, the contract could go to arbitration.

Representatives from the association and the commission met with a conciliation official June 4 in a 12 hour bargaining session. Association Director Wayne Jessop said the meeting cleared up some of the issues, but the two groups were unable to reach agreement on several "key issues".

Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett, chairman of the police commission, said he hoped the negotiations would be resolved without having to go to arbitration.

"There's nothing to fear about arbitration, but it's a long, drawn-out process," he said. "As long as you're meeting, you aren't going to go for arbitration. If we haven't settled the outstanding issues during the meeting, then we'll be at arbitration."

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