

Criticism raised over report on conservation authorities

By BRIAN MacLEOD
Herald Staff

A provincial report which redefines the organization of conservation authorities is being criticized by members of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and the Town of Halton Hills.

Among the more controversial recommendations of the "Burgar report" - named after Bob Burgar, the chairman of the committee that released the report last June - is a proposal to amalgamate some authorities in order to reduce their number from 33 to 18.

Halton Hills administrator clerk Dan Costea, Town Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson and CVCA General Manager Vicki Barron have all objected to parts of the report recently.

"It is obvious from the recommendations in the report... that the intent... is to add financial burden to local member municipalities under the guise of producing additional opportunity for conservation authority programming and development," Mr. Costea said.

Mr. Costea was referring to a recommendation to change the level of funding to conservation authority projects from the current 55 per cent to levels of 40, 50 or 70 per cent. That move would add almost \$5 million to provincial coffers to be distributed among the authorities.

Since municipalities pay the other 45 per cent of conservation authority projects, any reduction in funding from the province "will cost the municipalities money,"

said Mr. Costea.

Another recommendation, which would have "locally significant parks" taken over by the town, would also cost the municipalities more money, he said.

Coun. Serjeantson, who sits on the CVCA, says "you can't even predict the implications (of the report) because they haven't given the conservation authorities any mandate. The report recommends that membership of all the conservation authorities be reduced. That means about four of the CVCA's 22 members may be dropped, said Coun. Serjeantson.

And the implication of shifting the tax burden onto the municipalities "wasn't well received" at the CVCA, she said.

To Ms. Barron, the lack of a

specific mandate is one of the CVCA's biggest concerns. All 38 authorities have banded together to prepare a joint report outlining their objections, said Ms. Barron.

Right now there are overlapping jurisdictions and confused mandates and that won't change under the proposed re-alignment, she said.

The CVCA wants to be in charge of all the natural resource management, she said.

Currently, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food each have partial control of management of the natural resources in the watershed. For example, if the water flow in the Credit River is too low, it falls under the jurisdiction of the

MOE. If the flow is too high, the CVCA takes over.

If water management is the single most important benefit in a wetland area, the CVCA has control. If flora and fauna are the major factor, the MNR takes over. "There has to be somebody in charge," Ms. Barron said. "Somebody should be responsible for the river system."

The CVCA wants an independent commission appointed by the province to decide which items should be the subject of negotiations and to enact a dispute settlement mechanism.

But what happens next is unclear, said Ms. Barron. "I don't know what to expect."

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Students kept themselves busy during the March break at the Georgetown Public Library. Here Josh Prieur, 11, of Ecole Sacre Coeur and Harve Snow, 10, of Holy Cross School made crabs at the library. They were among over 100 students who showed Wednesday to create the crustaceans. (Herald photo)

PHCA in danger of folding

The Physically Handicapped Citizens Affiliation will fold unless an appeal to Halton Region for more money is successful, past president Pat Woode says.

The appeal, scheduled to be heard on Wednesday, could make or break the affiliation, according to Mrs. Woode.

Citizens from all over the Region use the association which provides information, acts as a resource to other groups, and provides support and advocacy services.

The affiliation now has between 45 and 50 members but it handles more than 200 clients a year, said Mrs. Woode.

Last September the affiliation, which is a registered charity, began a one-year program to establish a computerized data base. Funds came in the form of a \$16,000 start-up grant from the province and \$4,000 from Halton Region.

In order to finish the program, which is now only half completed, the affiliation has asked for \$13,000 from Halton Region this year but only \$3,000 has been approved.

Mrs. Woode is asking people who support the affiliation to contact their local councillors to voice their concerns before Wednesday's hearing.

Developer wants land back

Developer Al Pilutti wants to buy back land near Hall Road he sold to the town of Halton Hills seven years ago in order to build a subdivision.

Mr. Pilutti said he sold the town a parcel of land, located between Rosefield Drive and Fagan Drive for \$130,000. He now wants to buy it for \$250,000 and develop the lot for single family dwellings.

The lot will become landlocked and relatively useless to the town once two apartment units planned for the area are complete (one is under construction now), said Mr. Pilutti.

He said the town originally planned to place a parkette on the land but found the terrain was too rough. If the town sells the land back Mr. Pilutti vowed to build a one-acre parkette at one end of the subdivision.

The main reason the town purchased the land seven years ago was due to public pressure from neighboring residents who didn't want to see the land developed, said Mr. Pilutti.

Originally, Mr. Pilutti planned to

build 24 houses on the land. But he speculated the two apartment units would cut the number of units back to between 10 and 16.

A motion to instruct the town's recreation department to prepare a report on the land met with stiff resistance from Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson, in whose ward the land sits. Her request for a recorded vote produced a 9-2 result (Coun. Lil Bowman was the other negative vote) in favor of preparing the report.

"I totally disagree with it. I feel we're wasting our staff's time," she said.

"I feel that communities need to have open space as well as packed (together) houses."

But other councillors argued that the town is seeking more affordable housing and the motion calls only for a report on the feasibility of a subdivision in the area.

"If there's anything this town needs it's plans for affordable housing," said Coun. Joe Hewitt.

"All we're asking for is a report."

Council won't object to severance

In a bid to gain a land severance, a Halton Hills family has asked the town to tell Halton's land division committee it has no objections to the proposal.

Rolf and Luise Erne want to sever three-quarters of an acre off a 4.5-acre lot located on the east half of the Sixth Concession in Halton Hills. They want to give the land to their son.

Councillors agreed last week to tell the land division committee they have no objections to the severance, but the town has no jurisdiction over the committee.

NRS Brand Realty broker Dave Whiting spoke on behalf of the Ernés last week, although he said no real estate commission is in-

involved.

The land division committee recently deferred the application pending the town's input. The committee has come under criticism recently about allowing too many severances in the rural areas of North Halton.

"This is not a farm property," Mr. Whiting argued. "In essence it is a rural cluster candidate."

Halton Region is attempting to protect farming properties by limiting severances. But, Mr. Whiting argued, the land is not used for farming and is too small to have any viable future farming use.

The sticking point is that the Halton Hills Official Plan stipulates that adjacent residences

must be a maximum of 100 metres apart for such a severance to be considered infilling. The next house is 123 metres away from the Ernés.

Mr. Whiting urged the town to tell the land division committee that "this is a special situation... that there are special circumstances and that the 123 metres doesn't really enter into it."

Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller said he wouldn't support the application if the parcel was being severed off a viable farm. But, he added, there is a need for more housing in Halton Hills and applications such as this one should be considered.

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