

MPP Duignan shares his thoughts

Halton Hills Herald senior reporter Ben Dummett had a chance to sit down with recently-elected North Halton Member of Provincial Parliament, Noel Duignan, to discuss a number of issues facing not only the North Halton riding but the Province of Ontario in general.

The following is a transcript of the question and answer period between the two.

Question: You've said the problems at the Royal Ascot apartment complex on Hall Road in Georgetown reflect gaping holes in the provincial Condominium Act. What are the problems with the Act?

Mr. Duignan: "There are a number of problems with the Act. Some of the problems with the Act are that it is development-oriented and not consumer friendly. The act must be changed to give better protection to the consumer. Some developers sell 25 per cent of their condominium and rent the rest. The developer therefore controls the condominium. I also believe there should be greater protection provided to the consumer for deposits. They, (the consumer) should get what they pay for and get it on time."

Question: How do you think the Condominium Act should be changed?

Mr. Duignan: "I believe the Act should be strengthened so developers are required to put up at least a 50 per cent performance bond. The bond would stay in effect 45 days after 100 per cent completion of the project has been done. If this was in place the Hall Road problem wouldn't have happened. If the developer failed to complete the building, the bond would be pulled and the building finished. The bond would also encourage developers to keep their word. The Act is a piece of legislation I'd like changed soon."

Question: Do you think your party will be receptive to your ideas, towards changes in the Condominium Act?

Mr. Duignan: "Yes. I believe there is discussion at the ministerial level now as it relates to changing the Act. What the ministry has in mind for changes to the Act, I don't have that information at this time."

The Minister of Financial Institutions is quite receptive to ideas about changes to the Act and I will be having a meeting with him to express my profound wishes to the minister to mitigate immediate changes and express my views in relation how to change the Act."

Question: Have you had any meetings with local business people in Halton Hills? What was the outcome and how do you plan to address their concerns?

Mr. Duignan: "I've met with the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Issues Committee and we had a frank discussion. They had a number of issues that we agreed to disagree on. We agreed to disagree on the need for an environmental assessment on the Silver Creek Trunk Sewer proposal, (Mr. Duignan supports an EA), as well as on some development issues such as the Maple Avenue apartment development. I believe its the wrong development in the wrong place. We agreed to meet later on to further discuss the province's common pause day legislation which will be initiated in the spring. I want to foster a working relationship with the Chamber to deal with the ideas that will mutually benefit Georgetown and Acton."

Question: How do you consider supporting affordable housing on the Maple Avenue development property currently being proposed for two 15-storey apartment buildings, and similarly would you consider the same thing for the property between James Street and Wesleyan Street in Georgetown?

Mr. Duignan: "I believe whatever development ends up on Maple Avenue should be worked out between the town, developer and neighboring residents. This approach holds



Noel Duignan

true for the other property. I firmly believe developers should consult residents in the area of a proposed development to what they would like. I believe in a process of consultation."

Question: What is your philosophy concerning affordable housing and what constitutes affordably priced housing?

Mr. Duignan: "I believe no one should be paying more than 30 per cent of their gross income on rent. I would like to see it closer to 25 per cent but 30 per cent seems to be the acceptable norm for the cost of shelter."

Question: Will the province's new rent increase moratorium discourage builders and landlords from building more apartments and/or improving apartments?

Mr. Duignan: "That depends what side you talk to. I believe it won't have a negative impact. This is only a two-year moratorium so that landlords and tenants can work out a new rent control policy that is fair to both sides. Builders should work into rents an approximate amount for

ongoing maintenance fees and capital replacement, so they wouldn't have to increase rents over inflation except in the case of extraordinary increases in property taxes or hydro rates for example."

Question: If it does discourage building activity won't there be a loss of jobs for small local contractors?

Mr. Duignan: "No, because the trend today is to build condominiums and not apartments and because rents for new apartments should be based on the cost of the project, ongoing operating costs and a profit margin. If this isn't done it's poor planning or budgeting by the owner."

Question: Where do you stand on abortion?

Mr. Duignan: "I haven't changed my position since the election. My stand at election time and now, is I don't believe in abortion but I believe in choice. I believe a woman has control over her own body and I don't believe in imposing my morality on anybody else."

Question: Should provincial transfer payments be increased or cut?

Mr. Duignan: "I believe they (Capital Assistance Program Payments) should keep pace with inflation, both at the federal to provincial level and at the provincial level to the municipal level. The federal government has been decreasing CAP to the province, putting continuous pressure on the provincial treasurer resulting in problems to transfer payments to the municipalities."

Question: Why weren't the transfer payments announced to the municipalities in December, as has been the norm in previous years?

Mr. Duignan: "The result of the election and being a new government made it impossible for the government to announce them in December."

Question: Will they be announced by the end of January as has been requested by Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy?

Mr. Duignan: "I understand they will be announced early in the new year."

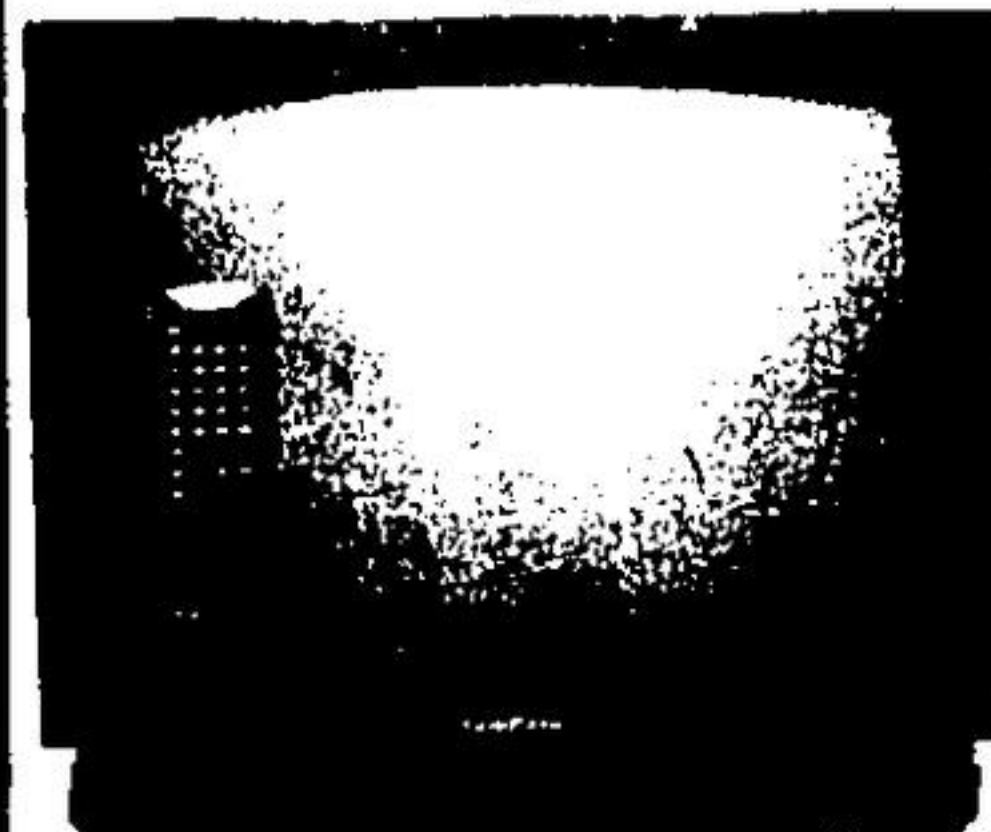
Continued on Page 11

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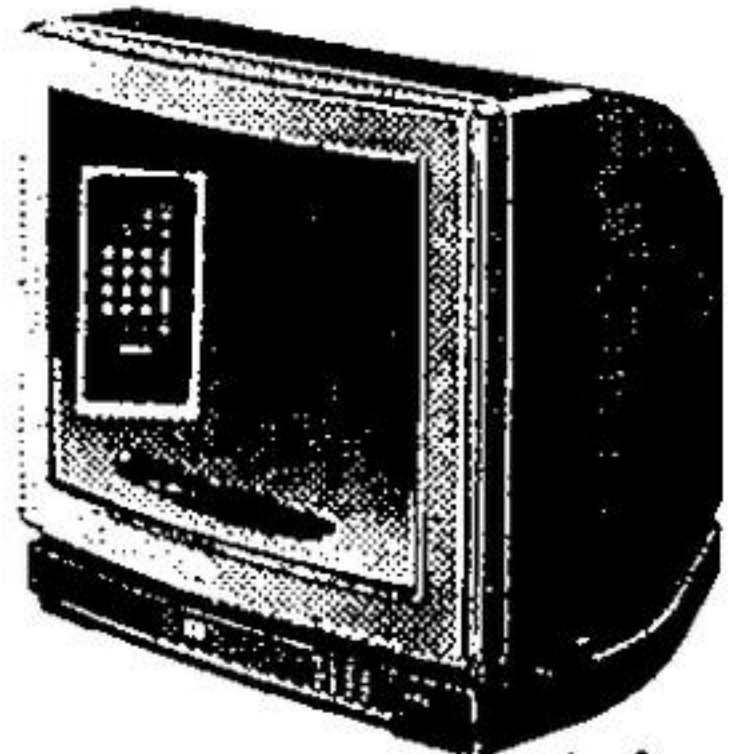
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