Politicians must decide on farm land future

By BEN DUMMETT
The Herald

The political will must exist if Halton is to have farm land in the future.

That's the message Halton Regional Planning and Development Commissioner Rash Mohammed gave to the members of the Planning and Public Works Committee Wednesday.

Burlington Regional Councillor Barry Quinn asked Mr. Mohammed what Regional government could do to deflate farm land prices. High prices for this type of land encourages development instead of farming, said the councillor.

Mr. Mohammed stressed Regional government must designate the proper zoning to land it wants to remain agricultural and more importantly, strictly enforce that zoning. Developers will be discouraged from buying agricultural land for development if it knows Regional government won't change the zoning, said Mr. Mohammed.

The question of maintaining Halton's farm land arose as a result of a presentation by Mr. Mohammed concerning the ongoing Halton Official Plan Review. The Region is required under provincial legislation to review its official plan (land use policy) every five years.

Mr. Mohammed told the committee the principles of "Healthy Communities" and "Land Stewardship" underline the review. "Healthy Communities" is the promotion of more compact urban centres and accompanying public transportation systems. Land stewardship involves the idea that certain land forms should be maintained and a balance should be created between development and environmental concerns.

Under the heading of land stewardship comes the protection of agricultural land in Halton, said Mr. Mohammed. He qualified this statement saying it may not be essential to save all agricultural land in Halton. Less acreage is needed today to run a viable farm, he explained.

Aside from politicians enforcing agricultural zoning bylaws to protect farm land, Mr. Mohammed suggested, following the meeting, the Region's agricultural land severance policy must be "tightened up."

The current agricultural land severance policy states "bona fide farmers" who have been on their land for 10 years can obtain Regional permission to establish a retirement lot on the property.

As part of the review, the Region has sought public input and according to Mr. Mohammed the public is saying it should be more difficult for people to obtain a rural severance. Today not all farmers granted severances are using it for retirement purposes, suggested the commissioner.

To seek further public input into the review of Halton's Official Plan there will be a meeting March 25 in Oakville. As well, Mr. Mohammed will present his ideas to the four Regional municipalities during the upcoming months.

Halton Hills will soon embark on a review of its official plan and for it to be approved it must conform to the Halton Region's official plan, said Mr. Mohammed.

Mr. Mohammed said the review will not be completed until early 1992.

$25,000 in grants recommended

Children in Halton Hills can look forward to learning about milk production at the Georgetown Acton Fall Fair later this year.

Regional Planning and Public Works Committee recommended Wednesday the Region grant the Halton Region Milk Committee $1,000 to fund the education project.

HRMC representative, Harold Middleblock, told committee members the group has been visiting fall fairs in Georgetown, Acton and Milton for the past several years to teach children about milking cows. As part of the educational program the HRMC hands out a glass of milk and a piece of cheese to every child who visits the group's booth.

Mr. Middleblock told committee members the $1,000 grant was needed to pay for this years project.

The Milk Committee, which represents 47 milk producers in Halton, handed out 7,000 litres of milk and approximately 50 pounds of cheese during the Milton Fall Fair alone, at a cost of $1,300 last year, said Mr. Middleblock.

Including HRMC, 12 agricultural-related groups were recommended for grants by the planning and public works committee Wednesday.

The grant total, which is just over $25,000, will go before Regional council for final approval this Wednesday.

Volunteers needed

To those of you who resolved that 1991 would be the year you'd make a difference, Canadian Mental Health Association, Halton Region Branch would like to offer you the opportunity to keep that promise. Volunteers are urgently needed for recreation programs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings in Burlington, Oakville and Acton. Just two or three hours per month will make a big difference. For information, please call Laura McCallum at 845-5044.

Lucky winner

Knechtel Georgetown Food Market, located at Moore Park Plaza, made an even more satisfied customer of Jackie Murdoch of Georgetown with the announcement that she had won one of only 10 original prints of artist Peter Etril Snyder's painting, 'The Cheeseman's Arrival' in an Ontario-wide contest of 70 participating Knechtel stores. Presenting Ms. Murdoch with her prize is Knechtel Georgetown Food Market owner, Bob Creasy. (Herald photo)

Wednesday, February 13

Love Notes

Roses are red,
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Whether your sentiments are poetic, cute or just plain funny, they belong on our special Valentines Day Page on Wednesday February 13th. For only $5 you can tell that special someone just how you feel and it's also a great way to show them what a romantic soul you are.

DEADLINE 4 P.M. MONDAY, FEB. 11TH

Use the handy space below to compose your Valentine message then call or bring your message to the Herald before the deadline.

VALENTINE LOVE NOTE

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