

Hydro looking to charge developers

By BENDUMMETT
The Herald

Halton Hills Hydro Commission may take the Town's lead and charge developers for engineering services.

The commission, at their monthly meeting Friday, directed staff to investigate if the Commission should charge developers directly for providing them with engineering services.

Commission General Manager Gerry Trudell explained the utility's current policy calls for engineering staff to do electrical layouts for proposed subdivisions without charging the developers directly. Comparatively, the Town requires developers to hire private engineering firms to do the work it requires before a subdivision application can be considered for approval.

Mr. Trudell said the commission does approximately \$70,000

worth of engineering work per year for developers. Normally it recovers this money when the tender is awarded for the installation of the electrical layout. The company awarded the tender pays a 20 per cent mark-up for equipment bought from the commission. This mark-up covers the cost of the engineering work, said Mr. Trudell.

However, financial recovery for commission engineering work depends on the subdivision going ahead, and herein lies the problem, said Mr. Trudell.

Over the past year the commission has done 10 subdivision electrical layout designs, but no construction has yet started on any proposal. That means the commission is not getting a return on the work it has done, explained Mr. Trudell.

He went on to say if the property is sold and a new subdivision

plan is put forth, or no construction begins three-to-five years after the electrical design is completed, then a new set of designs must be done.

The most extreme example of the problem facing the commission concerns an Acton property on the Fifth Line north of Highway 7. The property has been sold four times and each time the commission has drawn up a new electrical layout to conform with each new subdivision application, said Mr. Trudell.

Since no construction has taken place, the commission has done each of the designs without compensation in any form and that worries the commission, said Mr. Trudell.

The general manager said his report will go before the commission early next year at which time it will decide if its policy should be changed.

Turner takes up GST cheque fight

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

Halton-Peel M.P. Garth Turner said he's "blasting away" at the Minister of Revenue on behalf of an Acton couple whose GST

credit was denied after their income tax return was incorrectly punched into a computer.

"We're taking up the cause for William and Pauline Stout with Revenue Canada," said Mr.

Turner. "It's an unfair situation and we're doing what we can."

The situation unfolded after Mr. Stout decided to get the help of his local M.P. when his GST credit cheque didn't arrive in the mail. Having just moved into a new home and up to his eyeballs in bills, Mr. Stout was counting on the GST credit cheque to pay for his hydro bill.

He called Mr. Turner who checked into the matter and discovered somewhere along the line when Mr. Stout's tax return was being processed, a computer operator punched in the family's earning at \$214,431. In fact, the couple, which are both on disability pension, made less than \$23,000 last year which makes them more than eligible for a GST credit.

Mr. Turner said the Ministry of Revenue has admitted they made a mistake and said they would send the GST credit cheque to the Stouts in October, the next time the GST credit cheques will be issued across the country.

But, Mr. Stout can't wait that long.

"Why should I have to wait?" he asked. "I didn't make the mistake."

"Because I didn't get the GST credit, I had to explain to Halton Hills Hydro why I could only pay a portion on my bill because if I paid it all, I wouldn't have enough money to buy food," said Mr. Stout. Besides themselves, the couple have two young children to feed.

"I want Revenue Canada to get off their behinds and send me the cheque."

Mr. Turner said he's waiting to hear from the Ministry of Revenue to see if they will cut a special cheque for the Stouts; as he requested.

He said he's personally never faced this situation before.

Mr. Stout said if it happened to him, he's sure it happened to other people and wanted to make an issue of the mistake so other people won't be "ripped off".



Bill and Paulie Stout of Acton say Revenue Canada ripped them off by not sending them their GST credit cheque after a government employee made a computer mistake listing the couple's yearly income at \$2.7 million. In fact, the Stouts are both on disability pension and make less than \$25,000 a year and say they need their GST credit to pay off overdue bills. (Herald photo)

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