

Community

Change requires political power

Reliance on scientific data and the legal system won't prevent the Acton dump proposal from becoming a reality; political power is what's needed, says Lois Gibbs, famed American environmentalist.

That's the message Ms. Gibbs left with approximately 75 people who attended the Protect Our Environmental Resources, (POWER), annual general meeting Wednesday at Georgetown District High School.

Ms. Gibbs was the driving force behind the evacuation of 900 families from the chemical dumping ground known as Love Canal in Niagara Falls, New York.

The likelihood of garbage not ending up in the Acton quarry increases with the more "political power, POWER has," Ms. Gibbs told her attentive audience.

To prove her point, Ms. Gibbs told her story of how the Love Canal

families were only successful at pressuring the New York state government to move the residents out of the chemical dump area after "getting mad" and making the system work for them.

It wasn't enough to point out to state government officials the chemicals emitted into the air from the neighboring dump during one year resulted in 18 out of the 22 pregnancies in the area, ending in abnormal births, said Ms. Gibbs.

Nor was it enough that two of her four children were seriously afflicted with severe diseases because of the toxins they breathed while living in the area, she said.

Her family now lives just outside Washington D.C.

The government ignored all scientific data and legal arguments put forth by Love Canal residents, said Ms. Gibbs.

It did so, she said, because the

government sets the rules to support its agenda, which doesn't include protecting people's health and welfare.

When told by audience members it would cost approximately \$200,000 in legal fees to fight the Acton dump proposal if it goes before an Environmental Assessment Board hearing, Ms. Gibbs replied: "when it costs \$200,000 in order to have the right to choose what goes into your drinking water, there is something wrong with that."

The future quality of Halton Hills' water supply is what concerns POWER members most, with respect to the Acton dump becoming a reality. The group argues, if the dump goes ahead, it's only a matter of time before leachate - a poisonous liquid formed when rain water percolates through a landfill - will leak into area's water supply, the Amabel Aquifer.

Referring to the possibility of POWER appearing at a hearing, Ms. Gibbs said, "I suggest you blow up the process, not literally of course."

Ms. Gibbs' message was one of defiance. Once the hearing date is set and a location is chosen, POWER should show up a half hour before the start time and hold a press conference and denounce the process as unfair.

Once the hearing officer has explained the rules of procedure, all opposing the proposal should stand up together and ask the hearing officer to change the rules.

"If you stand together it can work," she said.

Gaining political leverage means planning out a strategy to turn the system around and use it against the government, said Ms. Gibbs.

It's important POWER win this fight not just for the local community, said Ms. Gibbs, but also for the green movement around the world.



And the winner is...

Famed American environmentalist Lois Gibbs picked the winners of the POWER - sponsored draw for three Robert Bateman prints worth a total value of \$10,000, while POWER executive member Paul Hynds looked on during the group's annual general meeting last Wednesday at Georgetown District High School. The lucky draw winners included, Ken Boyes, Rockwood; Philip Toaffe, Acton; and Eileen Mills, Georgetown. (Herald Photo)

Regional hiring practises may change

By BEN DUMMETT

The Herald

Starting next year municipalities will have to be more proactive in their hiring practices to better reflect the community at large, says Greg Hughes Halton Region Human Resources Commissioner.

The Region's current hiring policy reflects the Ontario Human Rights Code, said Mr. Hughes. That means the municipality of Halton hires strictly on the basis of merit.

"We don't discriminate against creed," said Mr. Hughes.

However, Mr. Hughes predicts the hiring policy won't be adequate enough once the provincial government passing new employment equity legislation expected for sometime next year.

Employment equity legislation shouldn't be confused with pay equity legislation. The pay equity

legislation, which has already become law, deals with ensuring that women employees are paid equal to their, male counterparts. Employment equity legislation will deal with the hiring of minorities.

Although he doesn't know what the exact contents of the province's employment equity legislation will be, Mr. Hughes predicts it may call for municipalities to actively recruit and hire people from different visible minority groups.

Assuming Mr. Hughes prediction is correct, the next question is how many people will a municipality be required to hire who come from various minority groups.

Mr. Hughes couldn't provide an answer. He did suggest, however, the province may require the make-up of a municipality's government employees to reflect the ethnic composition of the area from which

the municipality draws its employees.

Another possible scenario, he suggested, is for the municipality's government employees to reflect the municipality's general population.

If the first scenario is applied to Halton, the Region's hiring practices will need to reflect the ethnic composition of its hiring base - Toronto to Hamilton.

Under the second scenario the Region's hiring base shrinks to Halton Region.

Acknowledging that the composition of the Region's government employees would be different depending on which of these two or any other scenario the province adopts, Mr. Hughes said the Region won't change its hiring practices until the employment equity legislation becomes law.

The wooden veranda surrounding the Townhouses was weak in some areas and uneven in other areas. Some of the patio's inter-locking bricks were missing, creating a safety hazard for the residents, said Mr. Stein.

Earlier this year, one of the tenants tripped on the patio, injuring his leg because some of the patio stones were missing, he said.

Mr. Stein said the landlords were

given 60 days to complete the repairs, but upon the property's re-inspection in October "nothing substantial had been done."

Charges were then laid which in turn led to Thursday's court decision.

Mr. Stein said he is hopeful the fine will lead to action.

However, he warned if the work isn't done within the next few weeks further charges will be laid.

Norval landlords fined \$1,500

By BEN DUMMETT

The Herald

The five owners of four townhouse units at 28 Adamson Street in Norval were fined a total of \$1,500 by a Milton court judge Thursday for failing to maintain the units in accordance with Town safety and health requirements.

Following the hearing, Ron Stein, Town Bylaw Enforcement Officer, said he thinks the fine is fair.

"It (the fine) sends a message out to landlords that they have to keep their properties in reasonable shape so they at least meet minimum health and safety requirements," he said.

According to Mr. Stein, the owners live in and around the Greater Toronto Area.

Acting on a public complaint, Mr. Stein first investigated the property this past summer.

At that time he found the units' exterior and interior in disrepair.

There was interior water damage in some of the units, said Mr. Stein, because of cracks in the townhouses' stucco exterior walls.

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