

# Urban review earmarks 401 corridor for growth

By MARK HOLMES

Though at least two Town councillors may not like what has been said in the first phase of the Region's Urban Structure Review, they've joined their colleagues and approved completion of the study recommending major urban growth in Milton and industrial development in Halton Hills.

Consultants putting together the Urban Review speculated that Halton Hills may be involved in a growth scenario that will bring industrial development to its Highway 401 corridor.

Regional Commissioner of Planning Rash Mohammed told Halton Hills Town Council that Halton Region is expected to have a population of about 424,000 by the year 2011, and that most of the additional growth should occur in Milton.

Of six possible sites for housing the anticipated 20,000 to 40,000 new residents and the 1,000 to 2,000 acres of industrial development, Milton was chosen as the best possible site. Local water services would eventually be augmented by a lake-based water supply, and the Halton Hills plan to

develop its 401 corridor could benefit from those lake based services.

However, Mohammed recognized that growth, including the Lake Ontario "pipe" to bring water to North Halton will be an expensive project. Calculating the cost to taxpayers, the regional planner concluded there will be an additional burden of \$80 per household - an increase to which, Councillor Norm Elliott strongly objected.

And, predicting the "pipe" would one day reach Halton Hills, Councillor Pat McCarthy warned that oversized services could destroy the agricultural

industry in Halton Hills.

Town planner Ian Keith responded, saying the study does not recommend growth in Halton Hills and Mohammed stressed the Town is in control of its own destiny.

However, the regional planner warned that difficulties lie ahead. He predicted growth in Mississauga will last another five to seven years, and then developers will look to Halton and Halton Hills.

There will be pressures put on the Town, Mohammed said.

When it appeared council would turn

down the recommendation to continue the study, Keith warned against standing in the way of Milton's future. He added that Halton Hills has a "peripheral" role to play in the growth but that's all.

Mayor Russ Miller concluded that the 401 corridor may one day be the place where "our children are going to get jobs."

And, when Councillor Anne Currie suggested a wording change to the recommendation, the motion to recommend continuation of the study was passed.

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# Who's in charge of Escarpment?

By GIUSEPPE GORI

When I moved to this community, seven years ago, I was very impressed with the natural beauty of the Escarpment in Halton Hills and I was reassured by the amount of "protection" that the Escarpment enjoyed. There are Municipal Plans, Regional Plans, a special Niagara Escarpment Commission (the NEC) set up by a special law (the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act). Moreover, the NEC was under the direct control of the Provincial Government.

In addition, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources at the Provincial and possibly also at the national level were involved in the process of "regulation." Each of these entities has a staff of hundreds of people paid by our taxes supposedly working for us.

If anything, I thought, there was too much regulation. They told me that within the Escarpment area an owner cannot cut young trees, cannot interfere with the course of water, nor with swampy areas, not even turn around a single stone without contravening the law.

Definitely I felt that the environment in the area was protected. It is true that more than one quarry was operating in the area, but these were all initiated many years before. Now, the current laws did not allow a stone to be turned, not a tree cut. The Niagara Escarpment Plan was about to be approved and it stated that it would "Ensure that the area would be protected"; it said the area is "a landscape unequalled in Canada" and "a source of some of Southern Ontario's prime rivers and streams and one of the province's principal outdoor recreation areas".

Surely we were in good hands and the proper steps were being taken by the government authorities.

Alas, as you now know I was living in a dream world. The reality was very different. I discovered this one bit at a time.

I discovered that a garbage dump had been proposed for the biggest quarry in town, the United Aggregates quarry.

I discovered that while I could not cut a tree or move a stone, this same quarry planned to expand south of the



22nd side road, to double its size and were authorized to extract another 20 million tons of aggregate.

I discovered that licences for this area were granted in 1972, when no environmental assessment was required. Since then no environmental assessment has ever been carried out and no environmental assessment was

planned.

I discovered that the NEC, in the words of its chairman Terk Bayly "merely recognized existing licences" when drafting its Plan in the 1980's, no questions asked, whether the planned development was safe or potentially disastrous, whether families live in the area or not, whether the well water will

be depleted or not, whether the Amabel aquifer, source of the Georgetown well water would not be affected or not. No environmental assessment of any kind required.

I discovered that the intent and the specific clauses of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, such as Article 2: "to provide for the

maintenance of the Niagara Escarpment and land in its vicinity, substantially as a continuous natural environment" were NOT implemented by the Commission established for that very purpose.

I discovered that the nice words in the introduction of the Niagara Escarpment Plan itself "Ensure that the area would be protected... a landscape unequalled in Canada..." were just a smokescreen behind which there were no enforcement rules.

So I set out to determine who was in charge of protecting the Escarpment area. After more than six months of work, letters and personal contact with government officials, local councillors, bureaucrats, our MPP Walt Elliot and other Ministers of the Provincial Government, I have finally concluded that nobody is in charge, but if there was a Ministry that was even less in charge (perhaps negative charge?) this is the Ministry of the Environment.

I have been given the classical "run-around."

I found out that the municipal authorities had no real say on the protection of the Escarpment. This unfortunate, because the local councillors are the nearest officials elected to represent us in matters of local concern. However, the Escarpment extends across many municipalities and a broader plan was needed. Fair enough.

I found out that the Regional authorities were deprived of their powers to regulate the Aggregate industries by a Supreme Court Decision (Southey, Holland and Callaghan, Dec. 1980) "insofar as... those parts of the Plan which the applicants (the Aggregate industries) requested be referred to the Board." In layman's terms, the Regional Plan does not apply to the Aggregate industries for those regulations which they objected to. Further action was expected in this regard by the Minister, but no action has been taken in the last 8 years. In addition the Regional Plan is overridden by the Niagara Escarpment Plan, insofar as the areas defined by the NEC to be within the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

I found out that the NEC, when established, did not take any drastic action against the aggregate industries, but these were allowed to continue business as usual and this is within the Escarpment area itself, that the Commission was supposed to protect! Should they not have checked, where these mineral extraction licences had been granted, if these

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