

Region reconsiders severances for retiring farmers

By STUART JOHNSTON
Retirement severances for bona fide farmers may not be a thing of the past after all. Regional councillors are reconsidering their earlier intentions of eliminating the tradition.

Review, staff had suggested the privilege of retirement severances have been abused in the past, therefore the Region should consider stopping them as a way of preserving agricultural land.

The review, entitled *B-4, A Vision for the 90s and Beyond*, is the basis for

a new Regional Plan, and outlines several points designed to protect and preserve rural, agricultural and environmentally-sensitive land, according to Planning Commissioner Rash Mohammed.

Two significant changes are a new Agricultural zoning and the

elimination of retirement severances.

Still, the majority of councillors believed abuses of the severance system, which they consider a privilege, can be eliminated through tighter controls, and told staff to report back on the pos-

sibilities. The remainder of the report they endorsed in full.

"I think the farm community is unique — farmers are different from those living in the urban areas because they have an option of where they want to retire," Burlington rep Pat McLaughlin said. "I'm willing to have another look at this...It should be revised."

Milton's Bill Johnson wholeheartedly concurred, and criticized his colleagues who supported the elimination of the severances.

"I'm amazed at how little some of the urban councillors know of the farming community," he said. "Farming is a hard, hard business, and it's getting harder now with Free Trade, longer growing seasons in the United States — it's a hard row to hoe...Unlike politicians, and those in the workforce, farmers have no retirement plans."

But, Burlington councillor Walt Mulkewich didn't quite see it that way, believing farm severances contrary "to the direction and spirit" of B-4.

"The purpose is to save and preserve agricultural land, and the Agricultural zoning is an important part of it," he said. "By sending this back for a report to tighten the criteria, is self-defeating and counterproductive..."

"Farmers are in bad shape, I agree, but their economic problems should be solved through other means and not by a land use plan. Also, this gives farmers a privilege that no other part of society enjoys. No one else has a land use privilege to assist them in an economic way. I don't think with our Charter of Rights we should be treating a different sector of society differently."

Burlington mayor Roly Bird supported the idea of tightening the controls on severances, but suggested farmers receive a cash subsidy from the government instead of being given a retirement lot.

"It would be cheaper and better for the Region if you develop a criteria for a bona fide farmer by giving them a cash payout — buy them out," he said. "Determine the price of the lot, or think of a way to pay them to retire — it would be cheaper for you, and it would prevent strip development in the agricultural areas."

Literacy guild workshop
The North Halton Literacy Guild is hosting a special workshop Oct. 7 at Scotsdale Farm entitled "How to Compose and Design Clear Language Documents for the Workplace." Participants will examine how any kind of business can benefit through the use of "plain language." Frontier College is conducting the workshop Oct. 7 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. The cost is \$25 per person. Registration before Sept. 25 with Literacy Guild, P.O. Box 218, Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4Y5, or call Karen at 873-2200.

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