

Acton's uncertain future is topic of town hall meeting

By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to the Independent/Free Press

Uncertainty about development plans and the closure of the olde Hide House were the key concerns raised during Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner's special town hall meeting in Acton Wednesday evening at the Acton High School cafeteria.

About 100 Halton Hills residents attended the meeting to voice their concerns over recent events in the Acton community.

High on the list of concerns at the meeting was the closure of the olde Hide House, which has meant the loss of 120 jobs and the possibility of a serious blow to Acton's economic future.

"I have had meetings with the Dawkins and the olde Hide House is currently protected under existing bankruptcy laws," Turner explained. "However, it (the olde Hide House) is not finished yet and I will be taking action on the matter, but I don't know if I can help solve the situation and I don't want to raise false hopes."

Turner added the olde Hide House is incredibly important to the town of Acton and its future and "there is still hope for restructuring and refinancing. The Dawkins are cautiously optimistic but still optimistic."

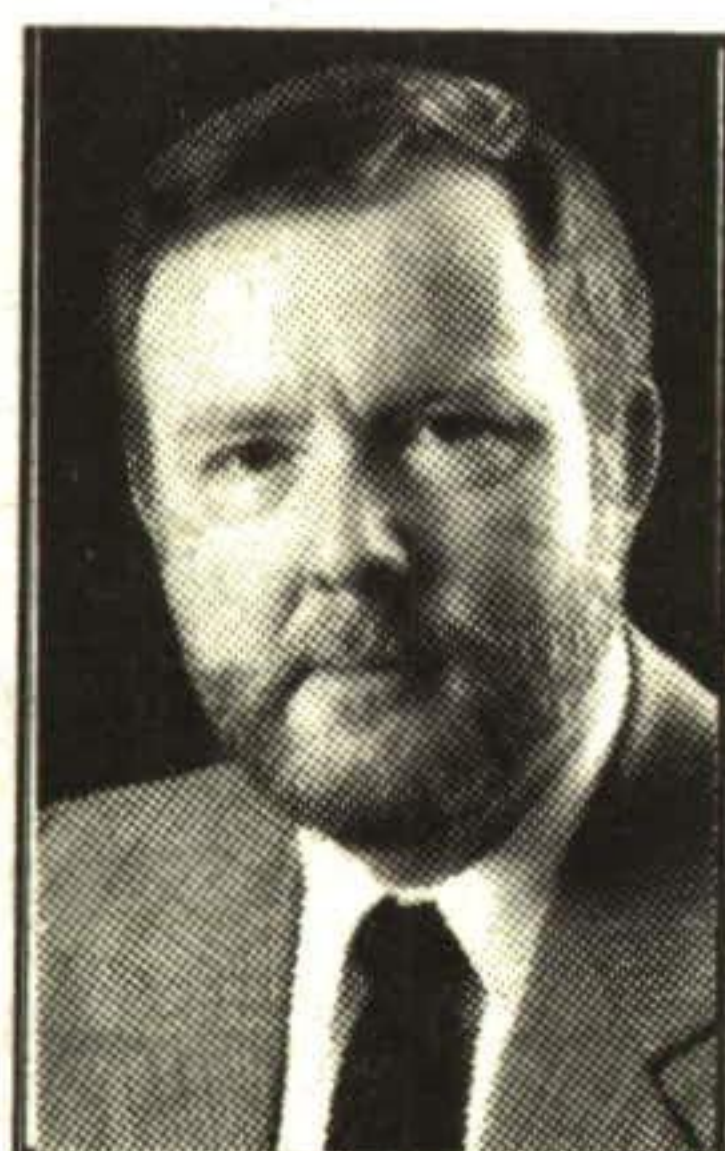
"We need development in this town and to build up the community. The olde Hide House has done a great deal to help this community and now we need to help the Dawkins family. If the olde Hide House closes for good, all of Halton Hills will lose," said Bob Malcolmson, president of the

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Also taking top priority at the meeting was the uncertain development of 800 housing units in Acton's east end by Coscan, which has been put on hold by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) because of concern about possible destruction of fishery habitat in Black Creek and Fairy Lake. A special eight-week Ontario Municipal Board



BARBARA HALSALL



NORM ELLIOTT

hearing regarding that development and others in Acton is set to begin tomorrow (Monday).

"I became involved in this matter back in early May and have met with John Crosby of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Right now it appears as though there is no way the development will be approved unless it can be shown there will be zero per cent effect on Black Creek," said Turner.

He says opposing the Acton Quarry landfill proposal could get tougher if the MOE shows leniency and allows the go-ahead for the development.

In this scenario if Coscan development does affect the fish in Black Creek, Reclamation Systems

Inc (RSI) could have their landfill proposal approved because the town's water and fish would already have been compromised.

Barbara Halsall, president of POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources), said while her group is not opposed to development in Acton, the community must protect the fish and that the project should not move ahead if it will mean the destruction of the Black Creek ecosystem.

"People are saying that it's fish or people but it must be fish and people. A viable solution would be to use the Acton Quarry as a reservoir instead of a dump site. The water is there to use and we will be announcing our plan for this, which we feel will be cost effective, very shortly," said Halsall.

Dr. Len Landry backed Halsall proposal in stating both the development and water problems could be solved with this possible solution.

"We need to kick RSI out of here and use the quarry as a reservoir. This would solve both problems of water and development," said Landry.

Councillor Norm Elliot asked POWER to look at the Coscan development in a positive light and that the entire community is on the same side in the fight to keep the dump out of Acton.

"I am 100 per cent in favor of development in Acton. If more development and business comes to town, there will be more people against a dump in their community and less of a chance that it will happen," said Elliot. "We need to use the argument positively and close the door on RSI."

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