

Put the brakes on NEC expansion

The future of the proposed expansion of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) remains up in the air.

There is no way to tell how the government will proceed in the coming years. In recent weeks, there have been a number of information meetings about the expansion proposal. Local citizens should be well aware of what is happening.

There is no doubt many property owners and residents are angry and upset by the proposed expansion. More information and better answers to their questions must be forthcoming.

There is nothing wrong with the provincial government looking for new ideas to protect the environment and our unique natural features. In addition, the NEP and Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) haven't changed in more than two decades. Looking for ways to improve is never a bad idea.

However, at this time, we see no pressing need for the expansion to proceed as proposed.

Local, county and provincial planning policies have all been developed (through public processes) with environmental sustainability in mind. And, they appear to be working well. At this point, there is no justification to add another level of planning authority to thousands of acres of land not already in the current NEP.

There remain too many questions about the expansion that must be answered.

Property owners need to know the answer to: why is this expansion necessary and how will it impact my property/business?

Municipalities also need answers about how the expansion could impact them financially. It is no secret municipalities are cash strapped and looking at an impending infrastructure crunch. Every lost dollar is money not being spent on important public services.

A recent report from Grey County suggests lost tax revenue could be close to \$700,000 for the county and local municipalities in the expanded NEP area.

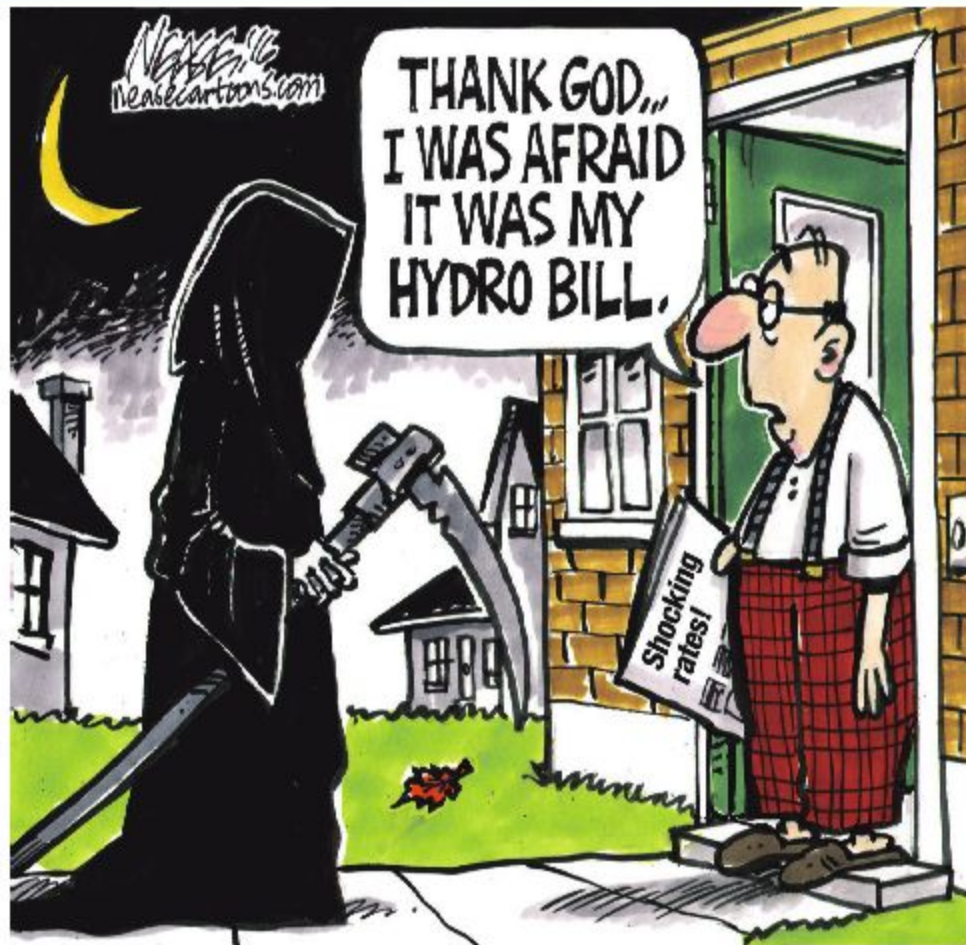
That is a lot of money and it is funding local roads, bridges, libraries and schools desperately need.

It's time to get all the answer to these questions. Local property owners deserve nothing less.

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Letters to the editor

OMB editorial hit the nail on the head

RE: Editorial, It's time to scrap the OMB, Oct. 27.

It's nice to read someone in the media flatly stating how bad the OMB really is.

My first encounter with the OMB was in the 1980s when working for a large business consulting firm. It was well known even then that the OMB was stacked in favour of the building industry and that when there was an appeal to the OMB, the municipality rarely, if ever, won.

Then I watched over the years as builders repeatedly used the OMB to bully municipalities. So municipalities tried to get smarter, and started working on solid planning for their jurisdiction. Still, the builders would win despite the decisions of elected representatives, who were acting in their constituents best interests, and despite planning

processes where those municipalities had done all the right things.

I agree scrap the OMB. You can't reform an organization which is so hopelessly entrenched in their ways. We need a new process for appeals which makes it easier for municipalities to defend their interests, with developers having to shoulder more of the cost burden in the process. It should not be possible for builders to request costs of any kind from the municipality. If there is a bias, it should be in favour of the democratically elected representatives of the jurisdiction in question.

Profit should not always be the most important thing.

Monique Attinger,
Georgetown

Silent but deadly

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in Ontario, Canada and North America.

In Ontario, 80 per cent of injuries and deaths from carbon monoxide occur in the home. CO is called the silent killer because you cannot see it, taste it or smell it. This deadly gas is produced by the incomplete burning of fuels and can be released by fuel-burning furnaces, hot water heaters, cars, fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters.

The best way to ensure that you and your family are not exposed to the dangers of CO is to eliminate it at its source. As you prepare for the winter ahead, be sure to have your fuel-burning appliances inspected by a certified technician. Your second line of defence is the installation of a CO alarm. Without an alarm, you have no way of knowing if there are dangerous levels of CO in your home.

It is the law in Ontario that all homes with a fuel-burning appliance, fireplace or attached garage must have a working CO alarm outside all sleeping areas. For added protection, install a CO alarm on every storey of your home. Protect yourself and your family from deadly carbon monoxide.

Ross Nichols,
Chair

Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council