

One last red-tape whipping for water-starved Hornby residents

By Graeme Frisque
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Halton Region and Halton Hills council decided to deliver one last parting blow to the hopes of 16 water-starved Hornby residents after a decade-long red-tape nightmare.

The situation facing these 16 families can be summed up in two passages:

1) Halton Region is aware of the well impacts being experienced by some of the residents in Hornby and has been working with those impacted residents to ensure they have a safe reliable supply of water. This has included the provision of permanent municipal water services to those properties within the urban boundary on Steeles Avenue and Hornby Road.

2) I know that water is an issue that needs to be resolved in Hornby, and think that the Region should be looking for other ways to solve it.

The first passage is from an email response to The IFP from Halton Region stating it is ready to connect 16 homeowners who have dealt with well issues as a result of regional construction projects in their area since 2007.

The second passage is from Halton Hills councillor Ann Lawlor in response to a de-

cision by four councilors to kill a motion to revisit the issue facing these folks.

In 2007, 68 homeowners in Hornby saw their wells dry up due to a sewage pumping and lift station construction project nearby on Steeles Ave. As a result, the region was forced to deliver water weekly in tanks for a year and a half, with the promise the wells would eventually recover.

Some did, but according to the Hornby Association of Rate Payers (HARP), most did not and many residents have been dealing with several issues ever since.

According to HARP, as of 2014, 33 of the 68 wells originally affected in Hornby never fully recovered and some not at all.

Things got better, (most of our 16) wells did recover to a point, but they have never ever fully recovered. There's not one that I know of that has fully recovered, said Erik Kowal, resident and president of HARP.

Not only did many wells not recover, HARP says others experienced problems with silt and smelly, dirty water; high salinity or iron content and in some cases even high levels of e-coli bacteria.

For almost a year we were all on tanks and they all had to be filled twice a week. (The cost) was into the millions of dollars, said longtime resident and HARP spokesman Erik Kowal. Some people never really

got their water back.

Fast forward to 2017 and regional construction projects on Steeles Ave. requiring de-watering to complete, are once again having detrimental effects on the aquifer.

All but 16 of the homeowners affected in 2017 have been connected to a public water source and those remaining had the same expectation right up until January of this year, when their area was pulled from a re-zoning plan by Halton Hills staff due to a 75-hectare development restriction imposed by the region.

Some of the landowners have been involved in the discussion for 18 months, and then at the very end it was recommended by staff that (the area) not (be included), even though the math is not exact. (The region) said it's about 75 hectares, said Somerville while speaking to The IFP. So we were saying put it in. Put in for this part (of the study), and then once we refine it down we can look and see then.

It was disappointing because I wish (the other councillors) had listened to our rationale a bit more, but that's what happens and it was a council decision, he said.

That disappointment persisted at council's May 9 meeting, a motion to revisit the issue received six votes in support and four against with one absentee. Despite having

majority support on council, a motion to revisit a previous motion requires two-thirds support, or seven council votes therefore the matter died then and there without even further discussion.

The motion to re-open debate was brought forward by Councillor Bryan Lewis, who was out of the country during the April 10 meeting of council.

I was away during the original Debate/Vote on the Hornby-area issues. I was (only) seeking the opportunity to speak to this issue, said Lewis. I realize that nothing may have changed, but I felt that a fellow Councillor should have an opportunity to speak and perhaps bring items of concern to all members of Council.

It is the process and lack of support of colleagues that I find most troubling. I said nothing may change but I just wanted the opportunity to state my concerns and perhaps clarity to issues previously discussed in my absence. I can sum up this process in one word disappointed, he added.

The four councillors who voted against even re-opening the debate were councillors Lawlor, Jane Fogal, Bob Inglis and Moya Johnson. The remaining six members of council present supported the motion to revisit. Councillor John Hurst was absent.

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