

# NEC development control to be reviewed by council in February

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Wednesday that the review was to be released Dec. 15, but hearing officers have requested a three-month extension. However, the NEC decided last week that "it is not prepared to grant a long-term extension."

As a result, it has asked that the results of the review be reported by early January, Borodczak said.

The review will deal with proposed revisions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) which regulates land use along the escarpment.

Regional councillors heard 14 delegations Wednesday, 10 arguing for the retention of NEC control of the escarpment and the remainder suggesting that development control could best be administered by elected bodies, such as regional and county governments along the escarpment which are accountable to the people.

More than half of those addressing council are residents of Halton Hills. While some of the environmentalists argued that a "co-ordinated approach" to development control along the escarpment can only be achieved by an agency like the NEC, others like Noble and Shropshall warned that the Region would be looking at considerable costs to implement control of escarpment development at a local level.

Whiting, however, argued that the NEP would be better administered at the local level where government is "more accountable" to the people. The NEC was never intended to be a permanent body, he said.

Rather, it was formed to write the Plan and, "then, to delegate administration of that Plan back to the regions and municipalities."

Whiting also suggested that Halton's bid to obtain development control of the escarpment isn't premature. "In fact, your action is probably six or seven years too late," he contended.

The possible costs associated with the transference of development control from the NEC to the region were also debated.

"It will cost you money," Borodczak told council. "It'll mean a greater workload for the NEC, (regional) council and the municipalities," he cautioned. "It'll be

more costly."

Borodczak suggested that sources of revenue expected by the region might not materialize.

The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act (NEPDA) doesn't permit the setting up of user fees, he said, adding that the expectation of financial assistance from the province is "highly unrealistic" as "they already have an agency (NEC) that is doing its job and doing it quite well."

While it has been generally accepted that some form of the NEC would remain as a 'watchdog' agency even if the province agrees to delegate development control to the local governments along the escarpment, Whiting suggested the NEC be dismantled.

"If you're going to do it, do it purely. Let the Commission go," he suggested.

Herman Turkstra, a Hamilton lawyer and volunteer member of NELOC, said the Region shouldn't experience any net cost after assuming development control powers.

In answer to questions from

Oakville councillor Stephen Sparling about the possible implementation of a "revenue neutral" plan to facilitate the transfer, Turkstra acknowledged that NELOC "recognizes there will be a transitional cost."

However, he said NELOC representatives are prepared to accompany regional staff members to Queen's Park to discuss a revenue neutral plan with Ontario's Treasurer.

Turkstra said one method of keeping costs in check during the transitional period is to ask the province to approve the use of NEC staff by Halton "at no cost."

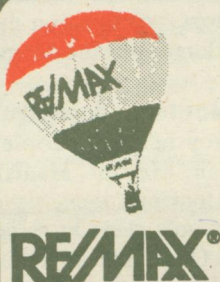
Turkstra also told council that the regions of Niagara and Hamilton-Wentworth have already approved development control resolutions and are awaiting Halton's decision before making "a unified approach" to the province. Of regional council's consideration of the issue on Wednesday, he said, "The eyes of Queen's Park are upon you."

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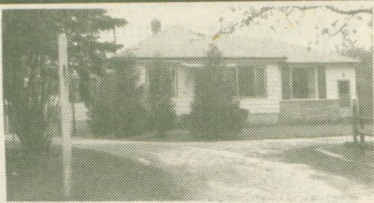


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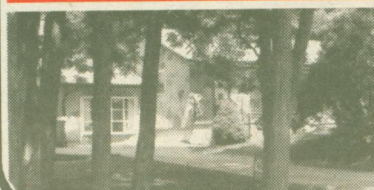
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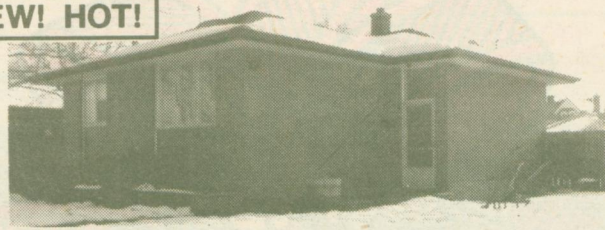


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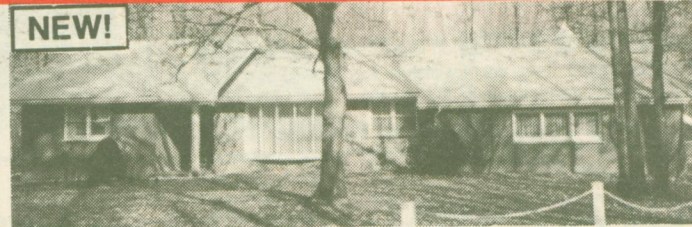
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