

Editorial

Is it all a waste of time?

The ongoing, seemingly never-ending debate about Niagara Escarpment development control has raised some interesting, thought-provoking questions. Who best can handle development permit applications for projects, big and small, along this 450-mile scenic landform that stretches between Niagara and Tobermory? Should it continue to be administered by the 17-member Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC), an agency whose members are appointed by the Ontario government? Or should administration be returned to the publicly-elected bodies of counties and regions bordering the escarpment?

Those questions have been fully debated in recent months at Halton Regional Council and Halton Hills Town Council. There have been charges and counter charges, but for the most part, the battle lines have been drawn between the Niagara Escarpment Landowners Coalition (NELC), which wants Halton to take over the escarpment's development control and environmentalists, who staunchly support the NEC which they feel is best qualified to protect the whole of the escarpment.

Regardless of which way people might sway—and there are good arguments on both sides—there is one piece of legislation which represents the crux of the whole matter. It's called the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act (NEPDA) and, true to its name, it regulates planning and development along the escarpment. Because of this, all regions and counties which border the escarpment cannot simply seize development control of escarpment lands. They must make application, or request, that the transfer of these controls be granted by the government, or more specifically, by the Minister of the Environment, who has authority over the NEC and Niagara Escarpment lands.

Here's where things get interesting. While the legalese of the NEPDA is as complicated as most legalese is to laymen, it does say that the Minister of the Environment (Bud Wildman) or the Lieutenant Governor in Council (the Ontario Cabinet) can transfer development control functions from the NEC to county or regional governments. In fact, NELC members have continually argued that the NEPDA pledges that development control will be relinquished to bordering regions and counties once the NEC has fulfilled its mandate of preparing a provincial plan for the escarpment.

That plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), has been established since June, 1985.

During Wednesday's debate over escarpment control at Halton regional council, a portion of a letter written by Environment Minister Bud Wildman to Hamilton-Wentworth regional chairman R.J. Whynott was read. The letter, dated March 2, 1993, said in no uncertain terms that the Minister does not support the delegation of development control powers to regional and county governments.

That prompts another interesting question or two, or maybe, three. Why is Halton Region continuing to even consider taking on powers which obviously the Minister (and therefore, we would think, the Ontario government) is not willing to fork over? Why doesn't the Ontario government move to change or delete those sections of the NEPDA which apparently hold out false hope to counties and regions along the escarpment? Why, in light of all the allegations which have been made against the NEC about its inconsistency and unfairness as documented in sworn testimony by landowners during the Commission's Five-Year Review hearings, doesn't the Ontario government move immediately toward an independent administrative review of the NEC?

Once again, why does the Region continue to waste time asking for something that the Ontario government isn't prepared to give them? Perhaps the Region should assist disgruntled landowners within its boundaries by pushing for an administrative review of the NEC.

Yes, the Niagara Escarpment should be protected. But it should be protected with equal rules for everyone. If that isn't happening, then shame on all of us for not having the guts to change it.

The People's Corner

Special interest groups decried

Editor's note: The following letter was directed to Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller with a copy to Halton Hills This Week.

To the editor:

This letter is being written to express my deep concern about recent allegations of bribes being offered to Councillor Bill Robson and Councillor Heaton.

Councillor Robson announced the fact that he had been offered a bribe in a recent article in the Toronto Star, and this has cast a cloud of suspicion over local landowners, developers and business persons in the Town of Halton Hills. If the article in the Independent was correct, it appears that no law enforcement agency has been made aware or have opened an investigation into these serious charges.

Because of the very serious nature of these allegations I believe that you and council must be pre-active in this matter and put into place a mechanism for dealing with incidents such as this. I would suggest that you set up a standing committee of council that would be able to deal with allegations of wrongdoing that other councillors could

Draconian measure

To the editor:

It is with surprise that I read in our local paper that councillor Heaton has been restricted access to all staff members except department heads.

At this point I do not know much about the circumstances that led to this action.

Some questions might be worth asking at this moment, however.

How can Mr. Heaton remain an effective councillor if he has been restricted access to staff?

In order to serve his constituents well, he has to be able to gather information freely from any staff member that he feels would serve that purpose.

What were the causes that led to this action and why was the decision made in an "in-camera" meeting?

The public has a right to know the answer to these questions.

Are the reasons surrounding this secretive? Yes!!

Was the measure taken draconian? Yes!!

Do we as citizens of Halton Hills have a right to know? Yes!!

Yours sincerely
J. Kandziora
Georgetown

report to, of course, this committee would meet in-camera. This committee would be able to alert council of potential conflicts or wrongdoing, and then report these allegations to appropriate legal authorities. It would allow councillors to have a sounding board of their peers and I think would eliminate members of council from keeping such allegations to themselves.

I am also aware from my dealings with council in the past, the need for developers and special interest groups to develop a rapport with members of council and I am sure that some step over the line in their lobbying efforts. This committee could review what would be appropriate behavior for councillors and lobbyists in regard to gifts, din-

ners, etc. so the line is not crossed.

During my time with the Chamber of Commerce, the business community strived to have an open working relationship with members of council and allegations of wrongdoing affect all business persons in the Town of Halton Hills. I would hope that Councillor Robson would reveal all details of this incidence to fellow council members so they may be vigilant in the future when dealing with these people and that police commence an investigation to apprehend the perpetrators.

I know you have always had an open approach to suggestions from the public and I hope you may consider my idea.

Doug Penrice

Legion offer is appreciated

To the editor:

I was unable to attend the Seniors meeting so I have been reading about the Seniors drop-off Centre. Many seniors would like a place to go. Of course, the idea of the Dominion Gardens is really out of the question at \$70,000.

The Legion offer sounds very good, no charge or at least minimal rent. Legion facilities offered to the seniors and also the Legion will absorb maintenance costs, and the offer of a private office. To top this great offer, the Legion is prepared to install a chairlift if it would be required. What more would we seniors need?

I thank the Legion members for being this thoughtful. Of course, I

understood they would be. Let's face facts. Members are from the Canadian Forces, they went to war for Canada. The Legion building is for these persons of the forces to meet, play a game of darts, etc. and of course, enjoy a glass of beer and get together maybe talk over war times.

May we not drag this place for seniors on any longer. The Legion sounds perfect to me. It's nice to know we have the forces behind us, they always are there when needed.

At least we will not cost the town money, so taxes will not go up because of us oldtimers.

Kathleen Crowhurst,
Georgetown

Our community has "heart"

To the editor:

I would like to thank this opportunity to thank the following companies and individuals for the wonderful support of our Heart and Stroke fundraiser "Dance For Heart". Over 200 people came out and enjoyed the fun. Our goal was to raise \$10,000.00 and at first tally we should exceed this goal.

We would also like to thank your paper for running an announcement about the dance each week during the month of February.

Anna Christine's For Hair, C & S Printing, Carol's Beauty Salon, Connoisseur's Court, D.A.R.E., D.D.H. Distributors, Daddy's Chicken, Delrex Variety, Dorrie Bland, Elaine Lewis, Fay's Family Restaurant, Galoob Toys, Georgetown Golf & Country Club, Georgetown Rent-all, Hair Creations, Hallmark, J.V. Clothing,

Jason Michaels,

Leslie Michalak, Linda Colgan, M.V.P. Sports, N.H.L., Neilsons, Northern Reflections, Paper Factory, S & S Sound (D.J. Shane Adams), Sooters, The Coffee Grind, The Independent, This Week in Halton Hills, Val Kirton, Vanderburg Flowers, Woolco, Work That Body Staff/Friends, Young's Pharmacy, Zellers

I would like to extend a special thanks to Dan Bruton of Georgetown Golf and Country Club, who kindly made an exception and opened his facility to us for this fundraiser. Also a special thank you to all our members and their guests who helped us to surpass our goal.

Laurie Burns
Owner/Manager
Work That Body

For Pete's Sake



by Roe

THIS WEEK

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