

Tax system update facing regional council obstacle

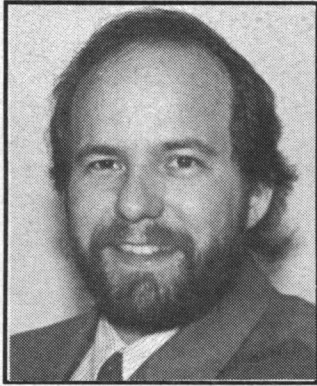
By Oksana Buhel

The Halton Citizen's Committee on Property Tax Reform outlined its recommendations for a new tax system Tuesday evening at the Town of Halton Hills Civic Centre. Reaction from the public was positive, for the most part, but the biggest hurdle will be to convince regional councillors to rescind their December 1992 decision.

Last fall, Halton Region introduced a region-wide market value assessment based on 1988 property values, but decided in December to delay the proposal for a year while a citizen's committee studied the concept.

The committee came back with its findings, outlined in the committee's final Sept. 1 report, which contradict the region's view that 1988 should be considered a base year. "1988 was much too volatile a year for the region to base its property tax system on," insisted Janet Hamilton, member of the committee. Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette agreed, saying, "1988 really was not a good reflection of economic times. There was hardly any development and prices were over-inflated."

The committee recommended property taxes be distributed based on 1992 market values in each municipality.



Rick Bonnette

If Regional Council decides to accept this proposal, the new tax system will not be implemented until 1997, which will provide the provincial government with enough time to complete 1992 value assessment study. Up to that time, the base year will remain the same - 1980 values for Halton Hills.

The report suggests the province remove from the property tax base any municipal services whose benefits extend past regional boundaries, such as welfare, child care and homes for the aged. "Funding of these services should be based on a more progressive form of taxation related to ability to pay," it was stated in the report.

Members of the public present at the meeting wondered why people would be taxed according to their ability to pay. "I have a big house, a high mortgage, and not much

money in the bank," said an unidentified man. "By my standards, I'm not able to pay these taxes."

Committee member Tom McCormack said the theory was based on precedent, going back to the years of Adam Smith, and seemed to work well.

One group which will benefit from the "ability to pay" concept is seniors. The committee's report recommends seniors, who demonstrate a need, be excluded from paying property taxes until the property is sold.

Asked if seniors will be charged interest on the amount, members of the committee admitted they would. "They won't be paying more taxes," a committee member tried to point out. "They'll be paying taxes and interest."

One of the alternative methods considered for financing municipal services, which



Ray King

would no longer be funded by property taxes, was an assessment system based on unit value assessment (UVA) - a combination of property land and building size. The committee claimed it has not had the opportunity to complete the study, but offered to oversee its completion if the region gave approval.

The report also states educational programs and salaries should be increasingly supported by the province through income taxes, but provides parents with financial opportunities to send children to preferred schools.

Town of Halton Hills representatives praised the report. "I'm highly impressed with this committee's recommendation," said town administrator Ray King. "They're very sound."

Mayor Russ Miller called the report a "great document" and applauded the committee for "really doing it's homework."

Regional council will be voting on the report Sept. 30, and members of the public are urged to attend the meeting and show their support. The council must give at least two thirds approval. "It's going to take some convincing," Hamilton admitted. Bonnette agreed. "Let's get out there (Halton Regional Centre on Bronte Rd in Oakville)," he said.

Halton Hills This

WEEKEND

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Turner statement called into question

By Oksana Buhel

Halton Region representatives are not impressed with Halton-Peel M.P. Garth Turner's Monday announcement that the region is shirking its responsibility regarding water and fish habitat concerns as they affect Acton development.

Turner suggested regional councillors "get on with providing the necessary services for development and not use the Fisheries Act as an excuse." at a press conference called by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce. Under the Fisheries Act, anyone responsible for increasing the level of deleterious substances in bodies of water, and altering fish habitat can be held liable. The Ministry of Energy and the Environment (MOEE) and Halton Region have been hesitant in approving water allocation for this reason.

Turner alleged Monday he had "tried to communicate" to the involved agencies the fact that Ross Reid, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, will not likely hold individuals liable for fish habitat alteration.



Peter Pomeroy

Wes Lammers, special projects co-ordinator of the Ministry of Energy and the Environment (MOEE) stated Monday he knew nothing about Reid's promise.

Regional officials were similarly in the dark. Regarding Turner's implication the problem was at the regional level, not at the federal level, Peter Pomeroy, regional chairman pointed out, "those kinds of comments are counterproductive." He added since 1982, the Region has spent a lot of money investigating all aspects of ground water, and to blame Halton Region for the problem is "incorrect and disregarding the fundamental



Marilyn Serjeantson

problem surrounding the issue. All we want is clear direction," Pomeroy insisted, "and it has not been forthcoming."

Halton Hills municipal councillor and regional planning and public works chair Marilyn Serjeantson pointed out she had been trying to set up a meeting between Turner and regional officials long before Turner's announcement, and is still trying to coordinate one, but a date has not yet been set. Asked what she thought of Turner laying the blame on the region for the Acton situation, Serjeantson said she was "extremely disappointed."

Federal candidates to 'Meet the Press'

Halton Cable Systems will be holding a televised 'Meet the Press' evening involving the Halton-Peel federal election candidates, Thursday Oct. 21 starting at 7 p.m. With the election scheduled for the following Monday, this could be the last opportunity Halton Hills voters will have to hear the views and viewpoints of those challenging for the riding.

Colin Gibson, editor of HHTW, will represent this newspaper.

The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring two Meet the Candidates Nights, Sept. 23 and Oct. 30.

The first (Sept. 23) is scheduled for 7 p.m. at McKenzie-Smith School in Acton, on Acton Blvd., and the second is scheduled for Sacre Coeur Hall, 39 Guelph St. in

Georgetown.

Declared candidates for the Halton-Peel federal riding who will be in attendance include; incumbent, Garth Turner, Progressive Conservative party and current National Revenue Minister; Julian Reed, Liberal party; Hilliard Cox, Libertarian party and Dick MacDuffie, Reform party.

Terry Jackson, General Manager of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, reports that moderators for both the Acton and Georgetown Meet the Candidates nights will either be members of the Chamber or volunteers who work with the Chamber. An announcement is expected next week regarding the selection of the moderators.

Advance voting locations announced

Locations for the advance polls in the Halton-Peel riding for the upcoming Oct. 25 federal election have been announced.

Those eligible to vote in the advance poll will be able to vote on Oct. 16, 18 and 19 between 12-8 p.m.

Georgetown - 318 Guelph St.
Acton - Royal Canadian Legion, 15 Wright St.

Milton (rural) - Campbellville firehall, Guelph Line and Hwy. 401

Burlington - 1450 Headon Rd., Unit 7.
Caledon - Caledon Community Complex,

82 Church St., Caledon East

Bolton - Albion-Bolton Community Centre, 150 Queen St.

Halton-Peel returning officer Don McMillan has set up an office at 318 Guelph St. (at the Georgetown Marketplace Indoor Mall) to service Halton Hills residents. Those requiring information on advance poll procedures, changes to the Election Act or just general information on how to vote, are strongly urged to visit the office or telephone 873-2220.

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