

Halton's legal action puts brakes on mid-pen highway

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

Halton Region and the City of Burlington have won the attention of the Minister of Transportation with their objections to the mid-peninsula highway. On June 26, Minister Frank Klees withdrew the environmental assessment terms of reference in order to resolve the concerns of the Region and City. "This is a victory for the Region and the City," says Mark Meneray, Director of Legal Services and Corporate Counsel for the Region of Halton.

On May 28, Halton and Burlington applied jointly to the Ontario Supreme Court for a judicial review of the planned environmental assessment for the transportation corridor. The 17-page legal application outlined numerous grounds for concern under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act.

Mr. Meneray explains that Halton's out-of-court success means: "The issues we had raised, namely, the need for alternative solutions to be developed and for better and more meaningful public consultation, will now be addressed by

the Ministry of Transportation over the next few weeks. Halton's concerns about the protection of the Niagara Escarpment can be given the attention they deserve, and Halton's residents can be assured that the environmentally significant features of this Region are given the same scrutiny and profile as those in the Niagara Region and Hamilton."

Minister Klees intends to resubmit the terms of reference after consulting with the Region and incorporating certain amendments prompted by stakeholders' issues. "The Ministry remains committed to moving ahead with this important initiative," wrote Mr. Klees in his letter to the Minister of the Environment.

Although the Region specified that freight and passenger alternatives to a highway be considered, the province seems committed to building another expressway. "Although there is a slight delay now of several weeks, I don't think this will translate into any major delay for the construction of the highway," acknowledges Mr. Meneray.

Rural garbage becomes a taxing concern

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municipal council?" Mr. Bennett also argued that any survey conducted had to meet stringent criteria. "It must have the person's name, address, tax roll number, 2003 tax rate, the proposed new tax, a space to vote yes or no, as well information on what percentage of yes surveys are required to pass the resolution, and the knowledge that if a survey isn't returned by a certain date, it will be considered a yes vote." Town and Regional staff noted his recommendations, promising that this survey would be a little more comprehensive than the one recently sent to Halton Hills' three hamlets regarding waste collection. "We want to take our time, and we want to involve the municipality tax teams," explained David Birkett, Regional Director of Budgets and Fiscal Policy Services. "Our feeling is that you want to present the numbers so that everyone can understand them."

At Councillor Rick Bonnette's suggestion,

the survey will not take place during the summer months when many people may be away. Instead it will be conducted in late August and early September.

On August 6, Rob Rivers, Regional Director of Waste Management Services, will present a recommendation to the Region's Planning and Public Works Committee calling for the elimination of the rural recycling depots as of March 2004, the implementation of rural blue box roadside collection in February 2004 and the development of a comprehensive communication strategy. He will also recommend that council accept the tendered price of rural garbage collection, while not awarding the contract until after he has met once again with the municipalities in September or October to discuss the finalized financial cost implications and, in Halton Hills, the survey results.

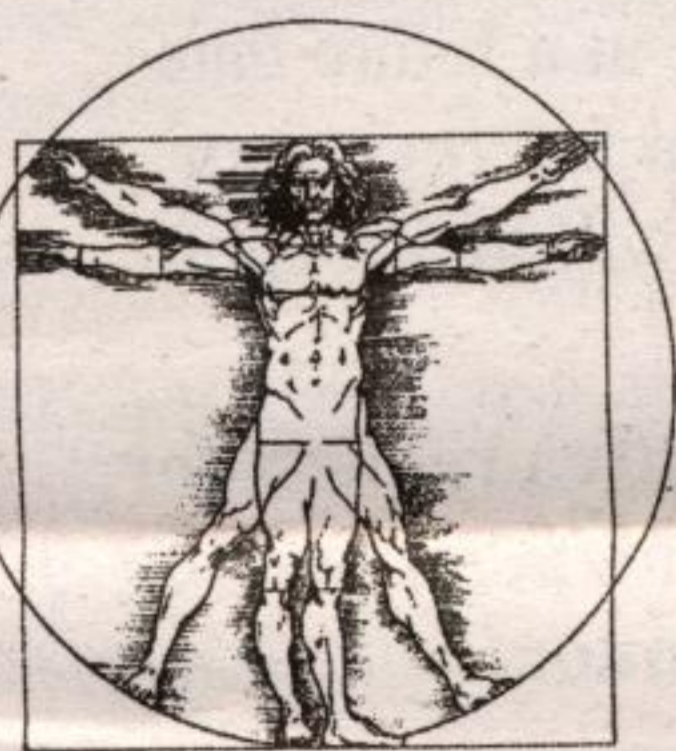
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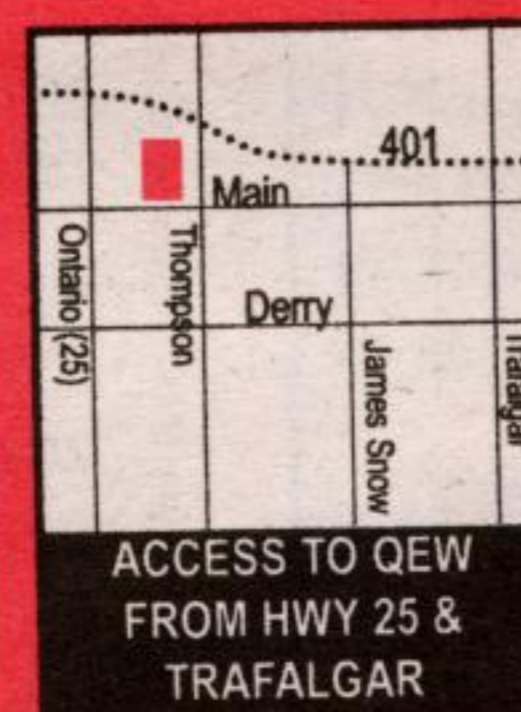
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