

# Milton residents organize against proposed condos

By BERNADETTE WARD

In a startling display of unity and community, over 400 residents crowded Milton Town Hall on May 16, ensuring their voices were heard in opposition to a proposed re-zoning of property at Main and Maple Streets.

Frustrated and concerned about a perceived lack of power in forming the shape of their community, residents made it clear that not only did they not want the proposed condominium project that would follow the rezoning, but that they were not particularly confident that council was keeping the community's best interests in mind.

"We want control of this community back," said Tracey Demaline, one of a well-organized and savvy delegation of five people representing 400 petition-signers whose mandate was to put the boots to the project to build five, four-storey condominiums for a total of 264 units pending approval of a zoning change from medium to high density.

The applicant for the project, Scott Sutherland, who has completed projects of this nature in Burlington and Oakville, did his best to convince council and residents that there is a void and he's just trying to fill it.

"We're finding that there's a lot of people that need this type of product," he said.

He cited figures that indicate approximately 35 percent of condo buyers are first time homeowners, 15 percent are divorced, separated or single parents and the balance is what he referred to as "the move down" buyer.

Delegates, however, had done their homework and were not easily swayed.

They pointed out that the developer had, in his application, asked for many variances including reducing setbacks, maximum densities, lot coverages and parking allotments.

"There are changes to every category in your own bylaws. These aren't minor variations," said Demaline.

Of the requested variances, the one to reduce yard size inflamed the crowd the most. If successful, residents could have a low-rise building sitting 12 feet from their backyard.

"I can't believe we would approve something like that," said Jan Mowbray, Councillor, Ward 3.

The issue of parking also raised a stir. The developer wants to reduce the number of spaces provided to .21 from .25 per unit, which essentially adds up to a reduction of 11 parking spaces. The delegation pointed out that the overflow would end up on town streets, creating a problem for residents.

Increased traffic was also a concern with a minimum of 264 extra cars in the neighbourhood, based on only one car per unit.

"I know part of the zoning is to be institutional and that will increase traffic also," said Joel Freedman another of the five delegates.

Anita Chase addressed the concept of enjoyment of living citing pedestrian safety around crossing Maple Street to get to parks and other amenities, loss of privacy, noise, light and demographics.

"This is a family-friendly neighbourhood. These types of structures are better suited to a downtown core, close to shopping and other amenities," she said.

The issue of schooling also reared its head with the resident's group noting the overcrowding of Chris Hadfield Public School and no forthcoming assurances from either school board that new schools are in the works.

"We moved into this neighbourhood understanding that our children would be accommodated in schools without busing," said Chase.

Although the crowd was restrained, an overarching theme of displeasure with council coloured the proceedings and in fact, in the case of Councillor John Challinor, Ward 4, came extremely close to serious accusations.

Some delegates perceived Challinor to be in league with the developer - a situation vigorously denied by both parties.

"I've not indicated support now or then for the project," said Challinor.

A further accusation of intimidation during a meeting with the residents group that took place the previous week was also leveled at Challinor and this one he brushed off as a miscommunication on the part of the delegate, which she denied was the case.

"I indicated to her how her and her neighbours might want to come before council tonight," said Challinor, who added that he was not an individual who lies or sets people up, but that he is plain spoken.

A number of other non-confidence issues such as a lack of notification and lack of time to prepare were issues raised, as was the inability of council to provide a different venue to accommodate the numbers of people.

Angela Michieli also pointed out that residents would like to see council hold a recorded vote at the time of decision for this application.

"As constituents, we'd like to know how our councilors are supporting us," she said to applause.

The application will go through the process, at the urging of Mayor Krantz, who pointed out to the residents that to not do so, would only invite an Ontario Municipal Board hearing with reduced chances of success for residents.

Another public meeting is to be scheduled and despite objections, the developer will also be invited in order to share his plans about the project. Staff will then complete a technical report and residents concerns will be included.

"All of your input will be so critical," said Krantz.

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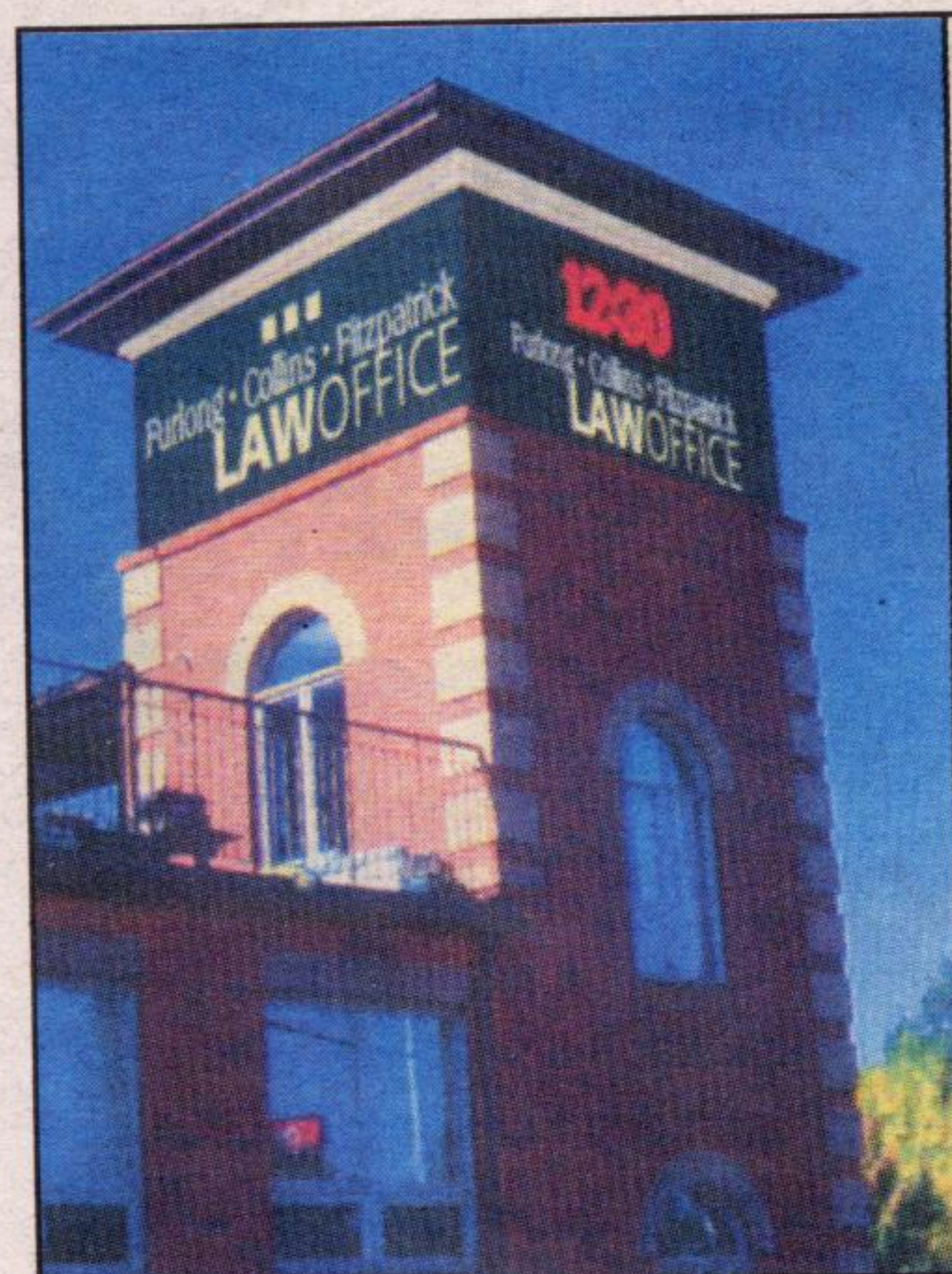
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