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No to upgrading of Milton Outlier designation

Milton Town Council sides with farmers against NEC

BY BERNADETTE WARD

The Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) will have to look elsewhere for support for their amendment to upgrade the designation of the Milton Outlier from 'rural' to 'protected' as it won't be getting any from Milton Town council.

Although the decision to not support the proposed amendment was already made at council the week prior, a number of delegations were heard from again on September 26, and council reaffirmed it's decision.

"The NEC tries it's best to protect the area...but the simplest things can become complicated," said Councillor Barry Lee.

Lee's comments were reflected in the vast majority of those made by delegates and councillors alike, with many concerned that the upgrade would make farming more complicated and difficult.

Problems with rebuilding a barn or changing from one type of farming such as dairy to poultry were seen as being problematic under the higher rating.

"Let farmers have the rights and freedoms to farm," said Roland Eggars, a local farmer.

Keith Hincks, however, pointed out that the rural designation allows for quarries and golf courses, where the protected one does not.

The impact on farmers, he said, would be negligible unless one has a golf course or quarry in mind. Spokesperson for the NEC, Richard Murzin, agreed.

"It is not the intent of this amendment to prevent agriculture," he said. "Specifically, the proposal provides additional protection against quarrying." This was also the perspective of Gwen Isings and Patricia Guenther, unable to attend the meeting and whose letter of support for the NEC amendment delegate Michael Grimwood read into the record.

Grimwood was in the interesting position of representing three different parties - himself, Isings and Guenther as well as the Milton Rural Residents Association (MRRA).

Although the MRRA voted against supporting the NEC amendment, Grimwood as a resident, favours it. He pointed out that he has both read the NEC plan and spoken to the NEC itself and has found no reason for the concerns proposed by some of the delegates.

"I have received what appear to me to be guesses, fears and speculations about possible severe restrictions to agricultural operations... but no factual examples," said Grimwood.

In terms of what affect council's decision will have for the NEC and it's proposed amendment, it's still too early to tell, according to Murzin. This type of process takes anywhere from 18 to 24 months from start to finish and the NEC is currently about half way through.

The commission will review comments, prepare a report and take a final position. This recommendation will go to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Milton council, says Murzin, is one of a number of commenting agencies and individuals but their decision to not support carries some weight.



Ready for the bath tub

PHOTO BY PETER C. MCCUSKER
St. Ignatius of Loyola supporters Brian Schmeer and Jason Bortolotti heading for cheering section at 42nd Oakville United Way Bath tub races in the downtown core Sunday afternoon. Hundreds of spectators turn out for this Oakville event where teams race bath tubs on wheels through the streets of Oakville.

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