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Acton company protests region tendering

By BRAD REAUME
Special

The ancient art of falconry is alive in Halton. The pastime, once confined to the aristocratic classes, still exists in Halton for less noble reasons—falcons are used to control scavenging seagulls at Halton's landfill site.

Halton Region's planning and public works committee recently recommended The Birdman of Waterdown, current contract holder and low bidder, for an additional two-year term.

Despite a protest by a competitor, council agreed.

The award was contested at committee by Michael Givlin, director

of operations for Bird Control International of Acton.

Givlin said his company has substantial, successful bird control experience at landfills and other sites. He added his firm uses a device which simulates a seagull being chased by a bird of prey.

Givlin expressed his concern that the tender specifications for the Halton landfill were not clear, which caused his original bid to be higher than that of his competition.

Committee members disagreed, saying the specifications were all included in tender documents.

The contract, worth \$125,832 for two years, was passed by council. The Bird Control International bid was for \$172,269 with an alternate bid providing service on a part-time basis for \$114,436.

Bird staff pitch in

Committee heard that bird control staff often pitch in at the landfill to monitor truck traffic. Givlin said he was concerned that a contract employee was doing work which should have been done by unionized workers.

"The bird control person has to be at the tipping face (dumping site) most of the time to control birds, so they just help with traffic control and inspection," said Cliff Chan, supervisor of waste operations.

"It's a well established practice. That's why it is

incorporated into the tender."

"A part-time bird control program will not achieve the same results of a full-time program," said The Birdman, Keith Everett.

He added that with a little help monitoring the trucks, landfill employees are able to compact the garbage more efficiently, which results in less area needing cover each day. That in turn helps keep the bird population down.

Caught on camera?

Ulrick Waterman, president of Bird Control International, spoke to council and provided a number of photographs showing hundreds of birds at the landfill.

Brent Marshall, acting commissioner of public works, said the photos were likely taken after business hours. The additional birds are there because staff at the landfill have been unsuccessfully experimenting with different materials to cover the garbage each day, Marshall said. Bird control is required while the trucks are unloading.

Everett pointed out the pictures show no trucks operating on the site.

"We have a well-oiled and refined operation that is very effective," said Marshall.

Oakville Mayor Anne Mulvale said she did not want to dismiss new techniques but felt the integrity of the tender process was at stake if it was reopened.

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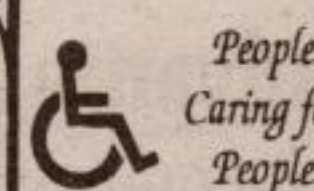
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