

Calls firms 'corporate welfare bums'

Council rebuts Davis charge

The majority of Halton Hills council rejected a colleague's suggestion that companies looking for incentives to move into town are nothing more than "corporate welfare bums."

Ward 3 Councillor Mike Davis unsuccessfully attempted to get a motion passed at last week's council meeting that the town request Halton Region to not subsidize development charges (DCs) with taxpayers' dollars.

"I don't want any corporate welfare bums to come to our community," Davis said. "If someone is not prepared (to pay) the full development charges, I don't know if I'd like them here."

Davis said DCs should be calculated so that incoming industries or developers pay the full cost of developing industrial land.

"I think we should stand fast and make sure that development charges are fair and not subsidized by Halton taxpayers," Davis said.

A DC is a per square foot cost calculated to recover growth-related costs associated with infrastructure needed to service new development such as water and wastewater pipes, road improvements and police over about a 20-year period. Recovering some of that money is crucial to minimizing the impact of capital investment on taxpayers.

Halton Regional Council just approved new DC rates for water and wastewater services and DCs for roads and other services are now being reviewed.

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce president Norm Paget said the local chamber could not support the region's proposed DCs increase, saying it would have a negative impact on the future development with the town's 401 Corridor. He also warned the costs send "a clear message to the development community that Halton Region is not interested in industrial/commercial development."

Paget agrees new growth should pay its fair share, but DCs need to be competitive with other municipalities.

Paget and commercial Realtor Peter McKenna told Halton Hills council two large industries, one being Proctor and Gamble, have already withdrawn from negotiations for land in the 401 Corridor area. They say the firms were frightened off by the region's proposed DCs.



MIKE DAVIS

At a regional public meeting on the DCs last week, about a dozen developers and industry insiders told members of Halton's administration and finance committee that proposed increases to the five-year-old development charge bylaw are too high.

The DC's in the 401 Corridor are proposed to jump from \$1.63 to \$5.56. Water and wastewater DC in the same area is set at \$4.35. That means a total DC cost of \$9.91 for regional services—a 66 per cent increase—and education and town DCs must be also be added. McKenna said the eventual total could reach close to \$15.

Mark Scinocca, Halton Region manager of budgets and development financing, said the rates have gone up the most on the roads portion of the DCs.

"The process is still evolving," he said. "We know there is some anxiety out there."

The numbers are alarming said Wards 3 and 4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal, but regional staff are doing a competitive analysis.

"I haven't seen the final results, but I'm expecting it will illustrate where we're at and where we can go. ... It's simple; it's X times Y equals Z. If Z is the amount of money you want to get and you set your development charge (X) too high, the other number (development Y) is going to drop. What we're going have to find is the balance where we're probably going to have the highest development charge (in the GTA), but it's not going be the number now. Because if we go there, Z is going to be zero," explained Fogal.

Davis's motion sends out the wrong message to businesses, she said, that the town is not serious about developing the 401 Corridor.

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary said Davis's motion could look like "we're taking care of our taxpayers" but the loss of industry—and its potential spin-off economic benefits—have to be considered too.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said, "There's no free lunch ... but it's prudent upon us remain competitive to bring people into the community."

Comments on the proposed DCs can still be submitted by May 20. A recommendation is scheduled to go before the administration and finance committee June 16 and then to regional council June 23 for ratification.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer with files from Jason Misner, special

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Beginning the week of May 10th and continuing throughout the summer, the Halton Region Health Department will larvicide standing water on public lands under the direction of the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Bob Nosal.

Monitoring of standing water has indicated that mosquito larvae are present. Larvicide will be applied by a licensed applicator contracted by the Region.

Larvicide will be used to control mosquito larvae in order to reduce the incidence of West Nile virus in Halton.

A granular formula of the larvicide Bti (Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis), Aquabac 200G, registration number 26863, will be placed in affected standing water on public lands in urban areas in Burlington, Oakville, Halton Hills and Milton.

Signs will be posted at each location indicating when the larvicide was applied.

For the locations and dates of treatment, please visit our Web site at www.region.halton.on.ca/health. For more information about West Nile virus, please call the Halton Region Health Department.

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