

Editorial

School's out

Today (Wednesday) a public meeting was scheduled at Halton Region to discuss the proposal for a private elementary school/equestrian centre on Eighth Line.

To be sure this facility has sparked plenty of local discussion since this newspaper first reported on the proposal Feb. 1.

A public information meeting Feb. 9 only fanned interest as several dozen people jammed the Civic Centre to voice their concerns about the facility, headed by Jesus Cordoba.

On paper, there is no question the multi-million dollar Keswick Sutherland School, which is proposed for a 95.5 acre parcel of land near Scotsdale Farm, is impressive. Founded by Cordoba and Callie Scheichl, the facility has been in the works for eight years and the pair indicated they would like to see it open by September—an optimistic, if not somewhat unrealistic, target.

However, area residents have said 'not so fast', raising several legitimate concerns. Chief among them is the increase in traffic such a facility would bring on a road that residents for years have said is already unsafe. Who, they also rightfully ask, will pay for the necessary road improvements? We sure hope it's not local taxpayers who have been told by politicians for years road cash is scarce and they have to wait their turn when it comes time to fix bad roads.

Along with traffic and road issues, there are also concerns about the impact on local water tables and the effect on the local environment. Planners often say new developments will try to blend in to the existing environment but that's as believable as the oil companies blaming a broken pipeline in Kuwait for a 10-cent-a-litre hike at the pumps.

While we're sure there is some NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) element at work here among residents opposed to the plan (including some who oppose private schools in principle), residents have raised enough legitimate concerns for regional councillors to put the brakes on this plan.



Letters to the editor....

Is now the time for Halton to adopt single tier government?

Dear editor,

The recent announcement by regional chairman Joyce Savoline not to seek re-election came as surprise to many for she has provided very competent, even-

handed leadership during her term in office and was facing no serious political contenders. She is to be congratulated for her years of dedicated service and hard work on behalf of the people of Halton.

As a result of her decision, after the next municipal election the office of Chair will have a new occupant. That person will be assuming a very powerful position that encompasses the area and population of four federal ridings. Where that individual seeks to lead the Region will have consequences for all Halton residents and for our future taxes.

The direction the Region might take can, in part, be determined by where we have been in the past, and where we are today.

The creation of regional government in 1974 was, in part, to respond to the forecast growth and the knowledge the old county system would be unable to cope with this growth. For 30 years Halton Region has been responsible for the provision of the essential services of local government including police, social services, water sewage treatment, waste management and others.

Is it now time for a major change in how we govern the Halton area? It is

obvious that at some time in the future Halton will become a single tier city structure with one mayor and one governing council. The question is whether our elected officials will consider the very substantial cost savings that are possible with single tier or will they wait until it is imposed by the Province, as happened with the City of Toronto and Hamilton Wentworth Region.

When regional government was initiated, it replaced the county system but at the same time substantially increased the cost of municipal government.

Let's look at two municipalities with about the same population as Halton:

Hamilton: (one mayor, 15 councillors)

London: (one mayor, four controllers, 16 councillors)

Halton: (Region: one chair, 16 councillors; four separate municipalities totaling four mayors, 38 councillors).

Do we really need four times as many elected officials to politically administer about the same population?

In addition in Halton we have five chief administrative officers, five treasurers, five engineering departments, five planning departments, five administration buildings, etc.

The proposed city status for Halton would have one mayor and 16 councillors, eliminating 42 elected positions.

The potential for major improvement in these areas is very substantial with a single tier administrative structure.

We have the major portion of 2006 to encourage our politicians and the public to give serious consideration to the future make-up of our local government and if this letter is a catalyst to that end, then my effort will have been worthwhile.

Ric Morrow, former chairman Halton Region

Concert a success

Dear editor,

I want to thank *The Independent & Free Press*, all of my friends and community organizations that helped make the Michael Kelly/Martha Zavitz Concert on February 4, a success.

In spite of the terrible weather, 140 people came out to the event.

I'm really looking forward to going on my school trip in March, and I know it wouldn't have been possible without your help.

Martha Zavitz, Georgetown

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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The Independent & Free Press is published every Wednesday and Friday at 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown Ont., L7G 4B1. It is one of the newspapers published by Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd., which includes: Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Alliston Herald/Courier, Bancroft This Week, Barrie Advance, Bolton Enterprise, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Shopping News, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, East York Mirror, Erin Advocate/Country Routes,

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