

Region wants pooling cash to go to roads, not taxpayers

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He argued if the Region doesn't give the money back through a tax reduction then local residents are going to be taxed twice for pooling, referring to the fact the \$6 million Halton doesn't have to pay for pooling this year is going to come from provincial tax dollars.

"Taxpayers are going to be double-taxed," he said.

Acting Commissioner of Corporate Services Mark Scinocca pointed out to Dennison that Halton has serious needs in its transportation program that have to be dealt with.

The other council members present largely spoke out in favour of setting the money aside for infrastructure projects.

Halton Hills Councillor Jane Fogal said the bottom line for her is that the money goes into roads somewhere. She noted that in Halton Hills, the greatest need is for regional road improvements, not local.

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton said the funds would build assets that belong to taxpayers and are needed by taxpayers.

"I can't accept the assertion that if we take money and put it to the needs of the taxpayer, that's somehow misappropriating it," he said.

Regional Chairman Gary Carr contended if the money goes back to residents through a tax cut, the Fairness for Halton campaign "goes out the window."

The campaign was jointly launched by the local municipalities to ask the Province for changes— such as to the GTA pooling requirements— that would in turn give Halton the necessary financial capacity to address infrastructure deficits.

"A tax cut would kill Fairness for Halton," Carr said, noting that taxpayers will benefit if the money goes into roads.

Burlington Mayor Cam Jackson expressed doubts about the seemingly good gesture from the Province when it comes to GTA pooling.

He said he thinks the Ontario government could give the Region additional financial responsibilities that would use the freed-up tax dollars.

"It's not uncommon for a government to replace one inequity with another," he noted.

Oakville Councillor Keith Bird then suggested that if the money is going back into infrastructure, it should be filtered down to the local municipalities to fix up the roads they look after.

He put forward an amendment to the motion, and while the wording was still being finalized at press time, it basically calls for the surplus funds to also be offered to local municipalities for their infrastructure needs.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz voiced his support for the amendment, noting he doesn't have a problem with the funds going back to the local level.

The motion is on regional council's agenda for Wednesday.

Halton has long been pushing for an end to pooling, with its most recent effort in protest to the system being a motion passed by regional council to freeze its 2007 pooling payment at the 2006 level.

Under the Province's plan, pooling will be reduced by one-sixth of its 2004 levels each year until the program is completely eliminated by 2013.

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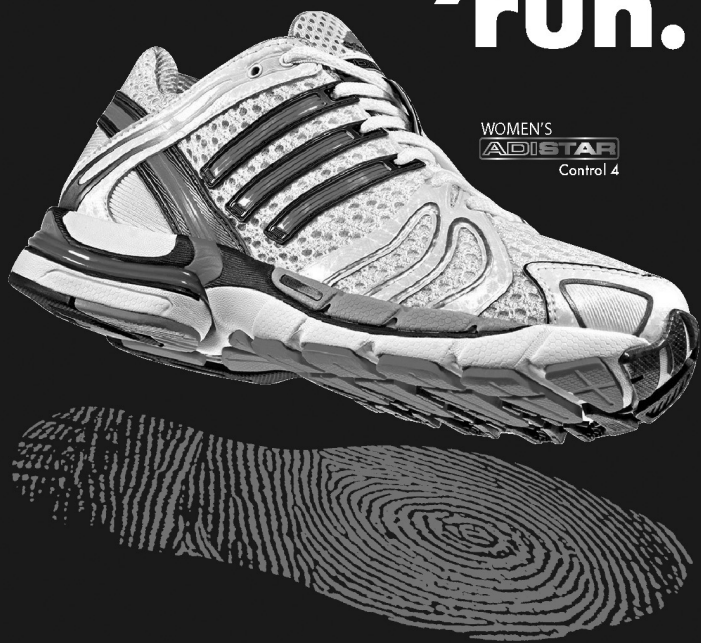
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