

OPINION

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What's fair?

For the past year Halton Region officials, led by chair Gary Carr, have been decrying the lack of fairness from the Province when it comes to municipal funding through its *Fairness for Halton* campaign.

We suggest that when it comes to "fairness" regional council members— particularly those in the Oakville and Burlington— consider the old adage "those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

Region staff is proposing a full-cost recovery increase to development charges (DCs) for industrial projects that could see region DCs for such projects soar from \$8.71 per sq. ft. to \$18.59 starting this August. Combined with the Town and Education DCs the fee would be \$21.58.

The proposal has sent a shock wave through Halton Hills council with Mayor Rick Bonnette calling such a plan a "death knell" for the local 401 Corridor while fellow regional council member Jane Fogal said, "With these rates we are out of business— completely."

According to Town Economic Development Officer Allan O'Neill a survey of Realtors and developers has revealed if the Region goes ahead with full-cost recovery DCs companies will wipe Halton Region off their lists for potential projects, suspend current plans for land purchases and cancel expansion plans already in the works by some firms.

Halton's current DCs are among the highest in the province and it is safe to say more than one firm has taken their business elsewhere after being scared off by Halton's punitive DC rate.

So why raise the rates now? With south Halton virtually built-out and having reaped the monetary benefits of development in the past, it is curious that councillors in the south now appear to have little interest in seeing their northern cousins garner any taxation and growth benefits.

Unfortunately, by sheer numbers around the Region council table, the south can dictate to the north and are quite capable of pulling off this power play.

But they should ask themselves if this is fair— a concept they like to think they know all about.

What do you think?

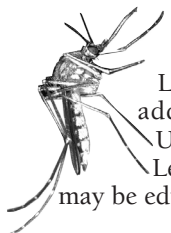
Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

Earth Hour, in which communities around the world are encouraged to turn off their lights for one hour March 29 (8-9 p.m.), is:

- A. A great idea that raises global awareness about climate change. (30%)
- B. A gimmick that will accomplish little or nothing. (70%)

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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 for content and/or length.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feds must invest in infrastructure: chair

Dear editor,

This letter is in response to MP Michael Chong's Feb. 5 column, (There's a solution to urban sprawl).

I agree with Michael, that in order to deal with our growing region, something must be done to address growth related issues. His suggestion of a need to overhaul urban and transit planning is quite accurate. In fact, this is what Metrolinx has been working towards. Metrolinx is an agency of the Ontario

government that aims at championing, developing and implementing an integrated transportation system for the GTA that enhances prosperity, sustainability and quality of life.

As a member of the board for Metrolinx, I introduced a resolution that was unanimously adopted, calling on the federal government for an immediate commitment to its requested share of the Move Ontario 2020 plan. The provincial government's

Move Ontario 2020 proposal plans for \$17.5 billion in funding over 12 years, with the federal government's requested share of this funding identified as \$6 billion. A letter and the resolution were sent to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, and Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities Lawrence Cannon to take immediate action. A response was received from the Prime Minister with no indication of a commitment, but rather simply stating that the Minister of Transportation would reply to the letter. More information on Metrolinx and this issue is available at www.metrolinx.com.

Canada's municipalities are the economic engines of the country, and infrastructure is critical to maintaining Canada's standard of living. With a growing population and a municipal infrastructure deficit in Halton of over \$300 million, the federal government must also recognize municipal responsibilities and the need for infrastructure funding.

In 2007, the federal government had a \$13.8 billion dollar surplus, and by 2013, it is expected to have a combined \$64.6 billion dollar surplus. The time to invest in municipalities is now. Federal support for municipal infrastructure is overdue.

I look forward to working with Mr. Chong and all of Halton's MPs to ensure that we are able to continue to make Halton a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

Barbara Halsall,
Past President of P.O.W.E.R.

Gary Carr, Halton Regional Chair

Share your growth concerns with politicians

Dear editor,

Many share the frustrations of letter writer Carolyn MacColl (Sharing views on growth a waste of time, Feb. 8), but if you are passionate about not wanting to pave precious farmland and slowing growth, NOW is the time to get informed and take action!

This is not our town council. The Province in its *Places to Grow* legislation is saying that by 2031 Halton Region's population will double from 2001 figures. The Region has accepted those numbers and tried to fit them in— 60 per cent on "greenfields" (farmland). Environmental groups, supported by concerns of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, are asking the Region to question the numbers, to make this a "true sustainability plan" not just as a label.

A real sustainability plan would recognize that food security is a serious question. Combine California water shortages with the rising cost of fuel,

as resources deplete, and the idea of growing vegetables in far off places becomes totally impractical. How much land would we need to feed the people in Halton? Fifteen U.S. states consider their farmland so valuable they pay the farmers for the development rights to keep the land as a farm.

WRITE NOW! Send your letter to: the Regional Chair Gary Carr; Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette; your regional councillor and important, copy the newspapers. Check www.halton.ca/ for e-mail addresses. I hope that your letter is a zinger so that you can readdress it to Premier Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan (dca-plan.mpp@liberal.ola.org), minister responsible for Places to Grow.

If your neighbours have similar concerns urge them to take the energy they are spending grumbling and go on the record with letters.