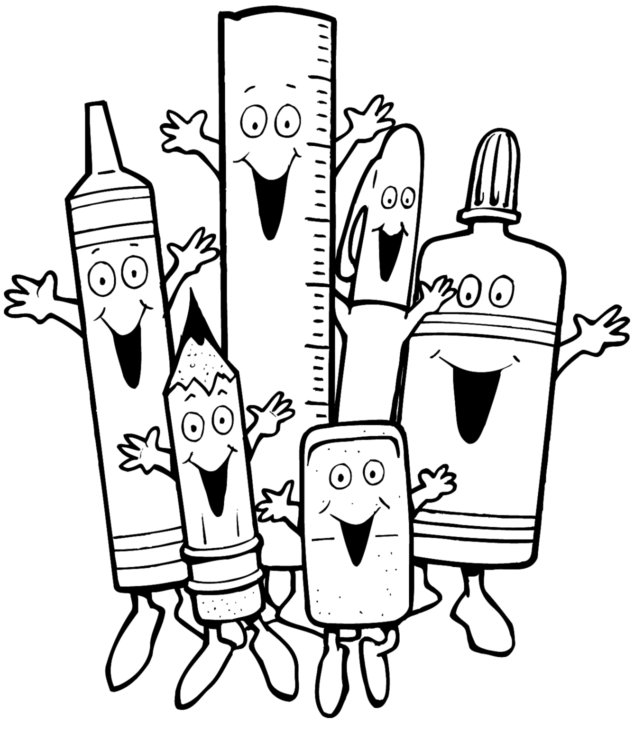
Jokes & Riddles

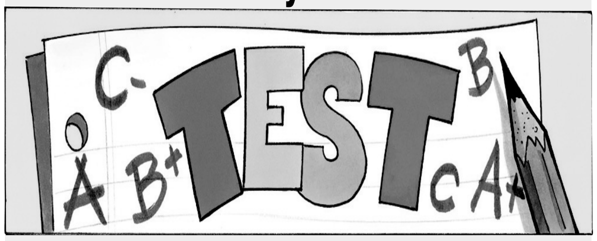
Q: Why did the boy eat his homework?

A: Because his teacher said it was a piece of cake!

COLORING PICTURE



What Rhymes with



List 10 words that rhyme with "test." 1. ____________

2. ____________ 3. ____________ 4. ____________

5. ____________ 6. ____________ 7. ____________

8. ____________ 9. ____________ 10. ____________

Some answers: best, crest, dressed, fest, guessed, guest, jest, lest, messed, nest, pest, quest, rest, vest, zest

Area residents reiterate opposition to developers getting break on DCs

MELANIE HENNESSEY
Special to The IFP

Halton residents came out in full force this week to tell the Region they don't want to foot the bill for discounts local developers could be given on their development charges (DCs).

The citizens turned out for the Region's administration and finance committee meeting Wednesday, when the new proposed DCs were debated once again.

While the committee ultimately supported giving DC discounts of about 30 per cent to manufacturing, office and warehouse developments, it first heard from the residents who are unhappy with how the discount will affect their taxes.

The lost revenues from the potential new discount would add about $10 onto the typical tax bill. Combine that with the mandatory DC exemptions the Region must grant under the Province's Development Charges Act and the discretionary exemptions already made for things like agriculture uses and it equates to around $70 for the average household based on a $300,000 assessment. This is up from the $53.60 the typical homeowner has paid over the past several years to cover DC discounts.

"Taxpayers should not be subsidizing private industries. Those who profit should be the ones to pay," said Liz Benneian of Oakvillegreen. "Ask that developers pay the full cost of development. As concerned citizens and taxpayers, we will accept nothing less."

Oakville resident Brian Burton reminded councillors around the table that some of them campaigned on the promise of removing the cost of development from residents' tax bills.

"It's time to make good on your campaign promises," he said. "Do the right thing for residents."

Kurt Koster of Burlingtongreen asserted that new development should pay for itself.

Milton resident Olga Shewchun shared similar sentiments, noting that councillors have an opportunity to make "wealthy developers" pay the true cost of development in Halton.

But Lyn Townsend, who represents the Halton Industrial Development Group, told the residents that the $10 the new proposed discounts will add onto the average tax bill "isn't going to dismantle a household."

Carol McDonald, representing the Milton Chamber of Commerce, agreed that $10 is an "insignificant" amount to pay for the benefits that will be derived.

"I know I want jobs for my kids, jobs for my neighbours and jobs for myself," she said.

Chris Kowalchuk of the West River Residents' Association in Oakville disagreed with the two women.

"To some people, $10 is a lot. That's three bags of milk," he said. "Why don't we charge them (developers) $10 more if it's such an insignificant amount?"

DCs are levied by municipalities to recover growth-related costs associated with things like roads, water and sewer infrastructure needed to service new development.

> *'Taxpayers should not be subsidizing private industries. Those who profit should be the ones to pay.'*
>
> —Liz Benneian of Oakvillegreen

The new DCs are expected to cover 78 per cent of development costs, or $56 million per year, leaving 22 per cent to be paid by the taxpayers, or $15 million.

It's proposed that the 30 per cent discount for manufacturing, office and warehouse development be gradually phased out by 2010, which would increase DCs by about $4 per square foot.

The development community has already told the Region on several occasions that the high DCs will act as a deterrent for businesses looking to set up shop in Halton.

Peter McKenna, a Halton Hills resident who spoke on behalf of the industrial/commercial brokerage community, once again listed several companies that are already choosing to locate outside of Halton in places where it's cheaper to develop.

Oakville Chamber of Commerce executive director John Sawyer said significant increases in DCs make it hard to attract investment in the community.

He also noted that Region needs incentives for businesses to invest in Halton, not barriers.

And Steve Deveaux, who spoke on behalf of residential developers Tribute Communities and the Metrontario Group, strongly urged the committee to maintain the status quo and charge DCs on an area-specific basis.

Currently the Region charges Halton-wide DCs for roads and general services and area-specific DCs for water and wastewater, with the latter fees being higher in Halton Urban Structure Plan (HUSP) areas where rapid development is taking place, like Milton, north Oakville and the Halton Hills 401 corridor.

While Region staff had been recommending a region-wide DC structure, Burlington Councillor Peter Thoem put forward a motion amendment— on behalf of fellow Burlington Councillor John Taylor, who doesn't sit on the committee— that called for the area-specific DCs.

Regional Chair Gary Carr was critical of such a motion coming up "at the last minute."

"Public policy making can't be done on the fly," he said, noting that staff puts out the committee agendas a week before the meeting takes place. "There's no excuse for this (proposed motion) not being out at the end of (last) week. In the future, let's do it properly."

"I told you ahead of time what I was going to do," Taylor said heatedly.

He and Burlington Councillor Jack Dennison went on to argue that the two DC options— area-specific and region-wide— were outlined in every report staff has prepared on the topic over the past several months.

Thoem's motion was ultimately supported by the majority of committee. It will now go before regional council at its meeting Wednesday for a final decision.

If the area-specific DCs are approved by council, then the cost to develop a home in a HUSP area would go from $22,752 to $28,864 and from $13,677 in a non-HUSP area to $23,764. The price for a retail development in a HUSP area would rise from $12.09 per square foot to $14.79, while non-HUSP retail would pay $11.23 per square foot, up from the current $10.36.

Manufacturing, office and warehousing businesses would have to fork over a discounted rate of $10.74 per square foot in HUSP areas, up from $9.59, and $7.18 per square foot in non-HUSP areas, which is down slightly from the current $7.85. Once the discounts are phased out though, these fees would be the same as those for retail developments.