

Council wants to help residents affected by hydro line twinning

By Frances Niblock

As property owners affected by the proposed twinning of the Bruce to Milton hydro corridor band together to protect their interests, Halton Hills councillors are looking for the best way they can help.

At its meeting last Monday, Town Council delayed final approval of spending up to \$21,200 for a consultant to review the terms of reference for an environment assessment of the proposal, until the August council meeting after learning the ratepayers had formed their own group to look after their joint interests.

The project needs approval under the Environmental Assessment Act and from the Ontario Energy Board.

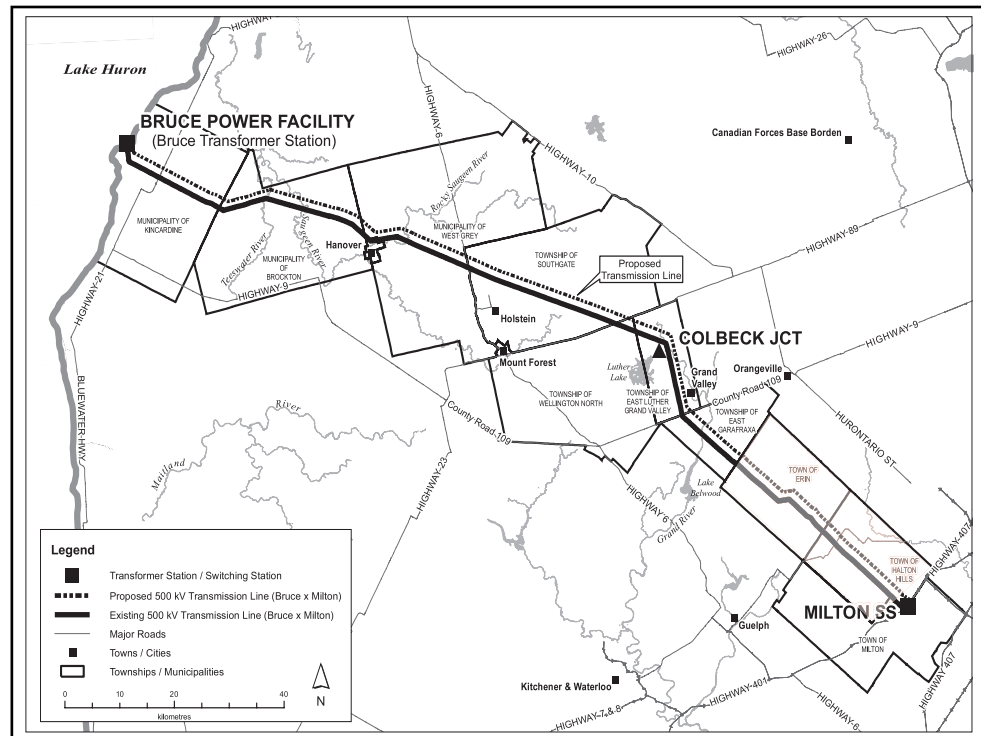
The proposed corridor will affect 62 properties in Halton Hills and four families expect their homes to be expropriated.

All along the corridor, property owners have joined a ratepayers group – Powerline Connections – and have hired a lawyer to ensure there is a fair analysis of alternatives and fair compensation for affected landowners.

Rural Councillor Bryan Lewis questioned why the Town still needed to hire a consultant since the ratepayers' group had hired a lawyer to do much of the same work.

"Maybe there's some other way we can offer help, guidance and assistance before we run off and spend \$21,200," Lewis suggested.

Town staff said while there would be some overlap or parallel work, there



Route of hydro corridor

would be "good value" in the consultant's work for the Town and every effort would be made to avoid duplication.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette, who suggested hiring the consultant to review the terms of reference and seek fair compensation, noted when he made the suggestion, they didn't know that the citizens were organizing themselves so professionally with a lawyer.

He said there's still merit in the Town hiring a consultant because there are natural heritage features that must be protected in Halton Hills and the option of expanding the corridor to the west of the existing corridor, not the east as proposed, should be studied to provide another analysis.

Jim and Julie Vail will lose their rural Acton home – where they'd planned to raise their children and then retire – if the twinning is approved as their Highway 7 property abuts the existing corridor.

They are in negotiations with hydro officials who will assess the value of their property this week. The Vails have not joined the Powerline Connections group, mainly because they believe an expansion to the east of the existing corridor, as suggested by the ratepayer group, would be just as bad as expansion to the west.

"We're going to move either way, whether it is built on the east or the west (of the existing corridor)," Julie Vail said on Monday, adding they believe the project will be built.

"Hydro officials were out at our house last Friday to start the process of getting our land valued. They'll be back on Wednesday or Thursday (today) to actually begin determining how much it is worth," Vail said, adding they will move ahead with the buyout if the figure is right.

"We chose not to delay the process – we are in limbo and can't do anything with our home and it doesn't make any sense for us to sit here and wait for the axe to drop."

The proposed 500kV line twinning project would involve construction of 180-kilometres of double-circuit line from Bruce to Milton, and the target date for service is 2011, with an estimated cost of \$635-million.

No pros, cons for new changes

No one from the public spoke for or against proposed substantial decreases and increases in the Town's Development Charges (DCs) at a public meeting last Monday at the Civic Centre. Based on the premise that new development should pay for itself so existing taxpayers don't foot the bill for new services, the Town charges developers fees to cover the capital costs of fire protection, roads, parks and recreations, parking, public works, libraries, general government and stormwater management. The fees are worked into the price of a house.

From now until 2016, the Town's growth-related capital costs for

New development must pay for itself

those services is \$74.4-million. A consultant hired by the Town said approximately \$36-million of that amount has been identified by as eligible for recovery through new development charges.

The proposed residential development charge rate for a single or semi-detached unit would increase by 39 per cent to \$11,634.

The proposed rate for non-residential development would decrease by 21 to \$23.61-per metre for industrial

development, and increase by 98 per cent to \$59.57 for other non-residential development.

If approved by councillors at their August meeting, the new development charges would make Halton Hills' charges lower than those in Brampton, but higher than those in Cambridge. The rates would be also be lower than Halton Region's development charges.

The consultant's summary said the proposed increases are a reflection of increased service levels, higher construction costs, changes in anticipated growth and financing costs.

Town Council will debate the proposed new development charges at its August 13 meeting.

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Vacation
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will re-open
Monday, July 30
We look forward to
seeing you then.



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