

Impact of Halton reassessment reduced: Rinaldo

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eligible for it.

Mr. Rossini said a rebate program is easier to administer than a phase-in for business because of the large number of properties which are taxed for more than one use. Phase-in amounts would have to be calculated for each segment of a mixed-use property, making that option monumentally confusing.

In addition, Mr. Rossini said, provincial and federal government property would benefit from a phase-in but not from the rebate.

"Since they aren't doing us any favours we won't do them any favours," said Mr. Rossini. He explained a phase in of commercial-industrial property would cost Halton about \$1 million in taxes from the provincial and federal governments.

One concern is taxes on major retail malls. According to Mr. Rinaldo the overall impact on mall properties is minimal but the

changes are significant for individual properties. Any attempt to phase in changes would directly impact other retail properties within the tax class, such as downtown retail stores. But malls will still qualify for the rebate program.

About 60 members of local councils from Halton's four municipalities met Wednesday evening for an information session on the proposed tax phase-in plan. They will each provide comments on the proposal before Halton council makes the final decision on July 15.

Five members of Milton council were on hand for the session as well as Jim McQueen, Milton's finance director.

"It's important to note that any shift has an effect on someone else," said Mr. Rinaldo. Local municipalities will have to consider if they want to allow final tax payments to be made in one or two installments.

According to Mr. Rinaldo the impact of reassessment in Halton is much reduced because the region went to a market value assessment system based on 1992 values.

Appeals of new assessments must be filed before the end of August.

Many regulations established by the provincial government regarding phase-ins were put in place to stop municipalities with significant changes from eroding the reassessment program. In some areas of Toronto there has been no reassessment since 1940.

For example, it is not possible to increase commercial-industrial taxes in favour of reduced residential taxes.

Oakville regional Councillor Kevin Flynn said serious consideration should be given to dropping the phase-in and rebate proposal entirely. He said residential taxpayers will be funding the rebate program for business.

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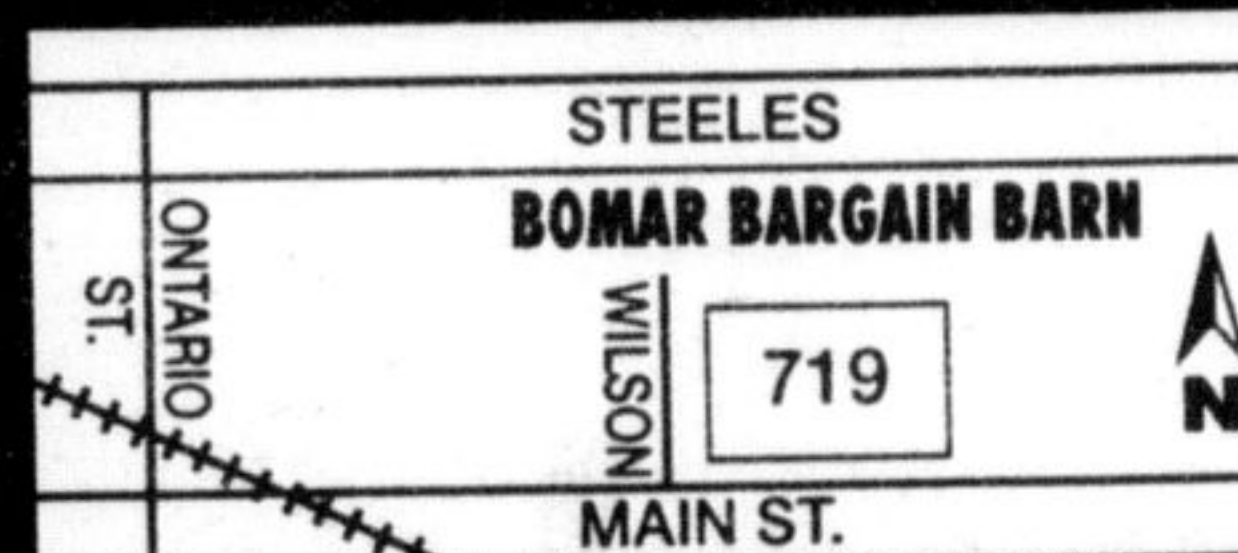
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