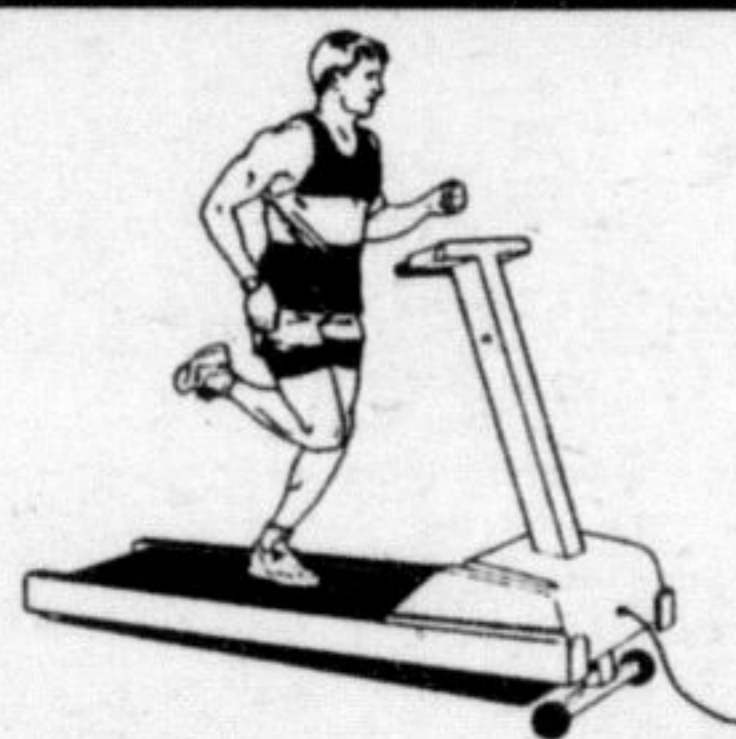


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# Sound barriers could become policy for residents bordering region roads

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Silence is golden.

That's what residents plagued by noise wafting from nearby regional roads have been claiming for years.

But so far, their best hope for a hush has been to move to a new subdivision.

Currently, the Region's policy — which is followed by three of Halton's four municipalities — is for noise mitigation measures to be built exclusively into new development areas.

And then only if noise studies prove they're warranted.

But a retrofit draft policy revealed at Wednesday's regional council meeting could change that.

If approved in its final form, it would permit retrofit sound barriers for neighbourhoods where the back or side yards of homes, apartments or nursing homes border regional roads.

But only noise affecting outside living areas such as porches and yards will be tackled, leaving indoor abatement up to the homeowners.

The draft report was overwhelmingly approved at council. But a final report on the issue won't be drafted until a consultation with residents and all four municipalities has taken place.

Under the draft policy, the cost of cutting down noise would be split 50-50 between the affected community and the Region.

The community's share would be collected under Halton's Local Improvements Policy.

A 50-50 cost share formula has also been adopted in Peel.

Currently, only Burlington has a retrofit policy in place. And it charges residents just 25 per cent

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MAYOR GORD KRANTZ

of the tab, leaving the City to pick up the slack.

The reason, explained Burlington Councillor John Taylor, is fairness.

"There is an extreme price sensitivity to this issue," he said. "If we build a new road past existing resident's houses, there is no cost to the residents."

But when existing roads expand, residents are put on the hook to pay their share.

Mr. Taylor cited Guelph Line as an example. He noted it started out as a two-lane road, has now swollen to five lanes, and could stretch to six in the future.

"That road is a new road, as far as (long-term residents) are concerned," said Mr. Taylor.

And even with a policy in place, not all noisy neighbourhoods will automatically slap up a noise wall or other barrier.

Instead, decreasing the din will be taken on a case-by-case basis, with each one requiring a noise study proving sound levels are above Ministry of Environment guidelines to win a council resolution.

And though noise walls are effective, they aren't always attractive or easy to maintain, staff pointed

out.

But whatever sound-reducing method is selected, maintenance would be the responsibility of the Region.

Staff estimate a wooden barrier could stand up to 12 years without fix-up, stretching to 25 years for a concrete barrier.

Like the racket from ever-increasing traffic, noise has been fingered as a growing problem throughout Halton.

But it may be difficult to quiet everyone's sonic woes, especially along Hwy. 401, said Mayor Gord Krantz.

"Every now and then I hear someone say 'what are you going to do about the 401?'" he said. "Well, you can't wall that thing from Montreal to Windsor."

Highway noise is the jurisdiction of the Province, said Halton's planning commissioner Pat Murphy.

But noise mitigation has been built into newer highways, such as the 407, through measures such as sound-absorbent pavement.

"But it doesn't do a lot for ambient noise in the community," said Mr. Murphy. "I'm afraid there's really nothing that can do it."

Halton Hills Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson wanted to explore natural sound barriers such as trees.

And she wondered if changes could be made to people's homes to help keep the noise at bay.

"It's impractical at times to stick up walls because the houses face the road," she said. "Is it possible to take another tact?"

In those instances, insulation or double-paned glass may help, said Mr. Murphy.

But the neophyte policy's big test will come from resident reaction, said Oakville Councillor Keith Bird.

## There's nothing fishy going on, explains mayor

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

There's nothing covert about the Town's interest in buying land by Bronte Meadows Park, according to Milton's mayor.

"It's something that has been ongoing for years," said Mayor Gord Krantz. "Certainly there's nothing secret about it."

He was responding to an anonymous caller to The Champion, who charged the Town with discretely planning to buy 4 acres of land near the John Tonelli Sports Centre on Laurier Avenue.

The land is currently owned by the Halton District School Board. The caller said the Town planned on selling half the land back to developers.

The caller likened the situation to a proposal at the E.C. Drury complex, which was recently rejected by town council. In that instance, residents were outraged that existing green space could be converted into condominium homes for seniors.

But nothing similar is going on at Bronte Meadows, said Mr. Krantz. He said the Town's interest was to preserve at least some of the land for park use.

"It was definitely in the best interests of the residents," said Mr. Krantz. "If the board of education sold that total package, it would have reduced some of that land."

The Town owns adjacent lands which contain a ball diamond, play structure, small parking lot and park building. Mini-soccer fields are found on the land owned by the school board. It had bought the 4-acre patch as a possible site for a school when subdivisions began blooming in the area.

But that never materialized and in time, the board declared the lands surplus, said the Town's community services director Jennifer Reynolds.

When discussions were taking place, the board's asking price was about \$110,000 per acre. To recoup some of that cost, the option of selling a portion of the land off Laurier Avenue was

• see FATE on page 13

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