



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Malboeuf tells letter writers to get facts straight on Drury lands

Dear Editor:

Not content with having stopped, for now, the construction of a much-needed seniors' housing project, the Friends of E.C. Drury have now decided to attack me in a letter-writing campaign. This is fine, but I wish they would get their facts straight and stop misleading the citizens of Milton.

First of all, the land in question is not a park. It has never been a park. This property is zoned for institutional development. The Province of Ontario owns these lands and has decided they are surplus lands. The government asked E.C. Drury if it required the lands for future use. E.C. Drury said no. The lands were then offered to the Town of Milton. In a closed-door session Milton council after a discussion of approximately five minutes voted unanimously, I repeat unanimously, not to purchase these lands. Unlike some of my colleagues on council my position behind closed doors is the same as the position I take in public. Following council's decision, the government sold the lands to H.D. Investments.

The staff recommendation that I and other members of council supported would have resulted in the construction of 195 single-story, 1300-square-foot bungalows geared for seniors. Despite what my opponents would like people to believe, you can designate and restrict a development to a certain class of people.

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) set the precedent in a ruling concerning a similar development in Vaughn. There are many such senior developments in Ontario. The recommendation would have guaranteed the continued existence of the Milton Tennis Club. That existence is now in jeopardy. Under the terms of the recommendation, the Town of Milton would have received at no cost to taxpayers 14 acres of the 35 acres in question, including 80 per cent of the forest area -- which we could have then rezoned as parkland thereby protecting this green space from any future development.

Opponents have stated that the Town would lose the existing soccer field and ball diamond. That isn't true. One of the conditions of sale is that H.D. Investments must replace the existing playing fields.

The Friends of the E.C. Drury say they represent the majority of Miltonians on this issue. To support this claim they presented to Milton council a petition signed by a little more than 700 people -- a petition that to say the least was worded in a misleading and bias manner.

At the council meeting of January 10 there were about 400 people present. Some of them were there in support of the project, but even if we accept that everyone present was opposed we are talking 400 people out of a population of more than 30,000.

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh in the last election won every poll in the area. If the majority of citizens are so opposed to this pro-

ject why did they overwhelmingly re-elect the politician representing the government responsible for the sale of these lands?

Opponents to the project are saying the Town should purchase these lands. The purchase price for this parcel of land is more than \$2.5 million, on top of what we would have to pay to upgrade these lands, as well as the cost of maintenance and liability. On the other hand had council approved the staff recommendation, the Town of Milton would have received \$1.3 million from development charges and building permits?

To do what the Friends of E.C. Drury suggest would end up costing the taxpayers of Milton at least \$4 million, not counting the \$150,000 a year in property taxes the Town would lose. How do you think the taxpayers of Dorset Park, Bronte, Omagh, and Campbellville would react to a tax increase of more than \$100 a year in order to pay for this land purchase?

We had, what I believe was a good deal for the citizens of Milton. Council rejected that deal and now it rests with the OMB, where we will spend tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in an attempt to defend our position. If we lose at the OMB, the developer is under no obligation to donate to the town the tennis

court or the 14 acres of green space. If by some miracle we win at the OMB, we could still end up big losers as the developer or the government could then turn around and decide to construct a large non-profit housing complex, which this land is currently zoned for and what the previous NDP government proposed for these lands. If this should happen we would certainly lose the tennis court and the forest.

My motive for supporting the staff recommendation was very simple. The recommendation would have resulted in the construction of much-needed seniors residences. It would have ensured the continued existence of the Milton Tennis Club. It would have resulted in the town acquiring 14 acres of green space at no cost to taxpayers and would have generated much-needed revenues for the town. I could have buckled to the political pressure, as some of my colleagues did, and took the easy way out but instead I chose to support a recommendation that I believe was in the best interest of the majority of the citizens of Milton, and for that I will not apologize.

Rick Malboeuf*Halton regional and Milton councillor*

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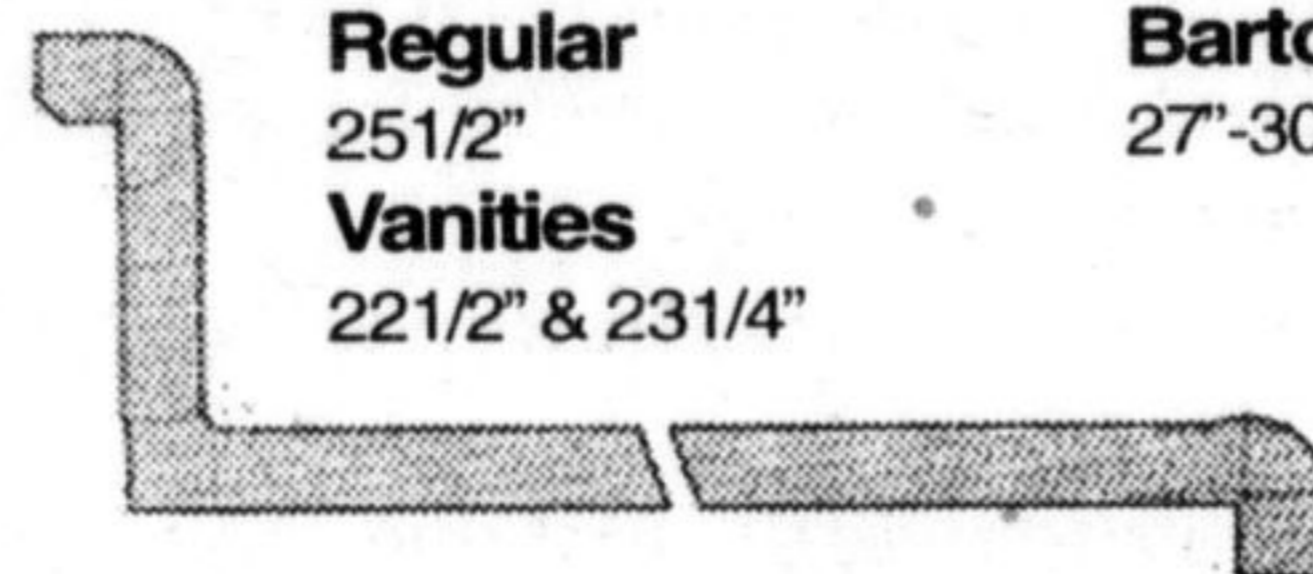
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