

Something is fishy: Hughes

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 past 15 years. The Drury application isn't specifically part of that investigation, but it meant the ORC was unable to confirm or deny the sequence of events surrounding the E.C. Drury sale.

"Most of our files are with the OPP," said ORC communications officer Judith Baird.

Though denying any knowledge of irregularity, Ms Baird said it's difficult to research the particulars of the Drury sale without the files.

"I have no way of judging the process on this property or any property. That's what the auditors are doing. If there is something, we'll be notified."

Documents received under the act confirmed the developer sent the ORC a deposit and letter of intent for six acres of the Drury land April 2, 1988, said Mr. Hughes. But the land wasn't declared surplus until May 15, 1998.

When a second letter followed on April 21, the developer's interest had been expanded to include more than 30 acres of the land.

That's because there had been talk of putting the site up for sale as early as 1991, said Colin Best, real estate agent for H.D. Investments.

Those rumours were bolstered when the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf declared the lands surplus in 1996. That date was confirmed by Town planner Anne Bouck.

"The Province first contacted the Town early in the month of January, 1997. My understanding was the lands had been surplus at that time, so it probably happened in 1996."

But the sale and tendering process should have been open and accountable to the public, charged Mr. Hughes.

That could have given residents enough time to lobby local politicians, who voted against buying the property in July, 1998.

Instead, he claims only selected real estate agencies were informed of the sale by the ORC. That left the door open for H.D. Investments to sign an agreement with the Province just two days after the council vote.

H.D. Investments plans to build a geared-for-seniors subdivision on the land.

Its application has been rejected by council and is awaiting an appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board.

But if there has been an impropriety in the dealings, it isn't the fault of H.D. Investments owner Dave de Sylva, said Mr. Hughes.

"He's done nothing wrong. He's just taken advantage of a good situation. It's the ORC who are being sloppy. There's no predictability of accountability."

At press time, Mr. de Sylva couldn't be reached for comment.

Dental program for old approved

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

A six-month pilot project will attempt to ensure that the well-being of Halton's frail elderly and special needs adults isn't being jeopardized by poor dental health.

The program is the culmination of efforts spearheaded by Halton resident Carole Ward.

The issue caught her attention when she realized her elderly parents had stopped brushing their teeth while living in a nursing home.

And they weren't alone. According to an earlier Halton staff report, up to 95 per cent of the frail elderly and special needs adults have trouble just brushing their teeth.

"It never occurred to me that I should be saying 'Dad, are you brushing your teeth,'" Ms Ward told the Region's health and social services committee recently. "It just never dawned on me."

But after watching her parents' teeth literally crumble, Ms Ward helped form the Halton Oral Health Outreach (HOHO) committee.

Now the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) and the Halton Regional Health Department (HRHD) have also joined forces to tackle the problem, which can lead to malnourishment.

"Literally, people can't get the nourishment they need without proper dental care," said Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale.

Recently, dental care for seniors in Halton retirement or long-term-care homes has been addressed. The pilot project, which was approved by both committee and council, will allow a dental hygienist to assess the dental health of vulnerable residents in their own homes.

Initially, the HRHD expects to see about six service requests per month, said the Region's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal.

"But once there's increased awareness, we may have an exponential increase," he admitted.

A survey taken by HOHO at its outset showed about 77 per cent of seniors could pay for dental services if they had access to them.

"But since then, we seem to be getting a lot of people coming forward who can't afford it," said Ms Ward.

While the will is there, what's missing is the funding to pay for dental care for at-risk residents who can't afford it, said Ms Ward.

But that could change if the Region can persuade the Province to include these services under the Long Term Care Act. "If it became a professional service under the act, then it's all covered," said Dr. Nosal.

Approval for the project was timely as April is Dental Health Month.

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