

# Tree bylaw open house gets heated

By MELANIE HENNESSEY  
The Champion

Tempers flared at a public open house on the Region's proposed new tree bylaw Thursday evening.

Dozens of local residents turned out for the meeting at Milton District High School to hear about the bylaw and voice concerns with it.

The bylaw is designed to prevent clear cutting or abject destruction of woodlands and to protect this resource. It will apply to all woodlands that are .5 hectares or larger and surrounding greenlands, subject to local municipalities delegating their authority to regulate woodlands between .5 and one hectare and the greenlands.

The main concern of the night was that the bylaw states: "This bylaw does not apply to activities or matters undertaken by a municipality or a local board of a municipality."

Former Milton councillor Lieven Gevaert said this is "abominable."

"You want to stick the farmers and landowners when the perpetrators of the bloody bylaw are exempt," he said. "You're getting us to be narrowly regulated and you yourself are not."

Kevin Brackley of the Milton Rural Residents Association then stood up and shouted, "You guys should practice what you preach."

Mr. Gevaert and Mr. Brackley were primarily concerned with whether the bylaw applies to Conservation Halton, since it can be considered a board of Halton Region.

But Halton Manager of Long-Range Planning Ho Wong said under the Municipal Act, school boards and conservation authorities aren't considered boards of the municipality in this situation.

"I'd like to see that highlighted," Mr. Brackley said.

Regional Director of Planning and Transportation Jane Clohocy emphasized the Region "didn't pick and choose exemptions."

Halton Hills resident Al Pilutti suggested trees like poplars, willows and Manitoba maples should be excluded from the bylaw since they're "noxious."

"They fall on top of each other. They're noxious things that grow everywhere," he said. "I've got poplars that come up from the ground like asparagus."

Mr. Wong said as a layman, he agrees with Mr. Pilutti but the Region's lawyer had concerns with defining a noxious tree. He said there's also the idea that all trees serve some kind of function, so no provisions for 'noxious' trees were made in the bylaw.

Residents at the meeting also heard about the Region's draft of updated environmental impact assessment guidelines.

Another public meeting will be held on the tree bylaw and environmental impact assessment guidelines May 28 at 9 a.m. at the Halton Regional Centre, with a presentation at 10 a.m. They're expected to go before the planning and public works committee June 15 and regional council June 22 for adoption consideration.

The tree bylaw comes as one of Halton's official plan review directions. It had been put on hold for about a year due to other priorities, like the Official Plan amendment 25 (OPA 25) and provincial planning reform initiatives.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at [mhennessey@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:mhennessey@miltoncanadianchampion.com).



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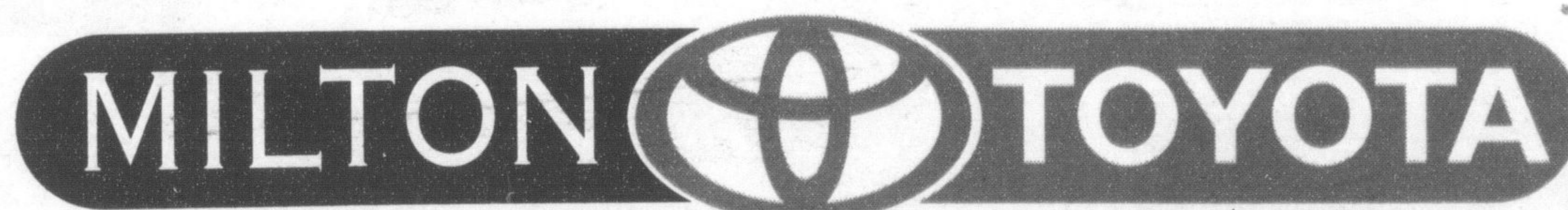
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