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Museum begs for mercy on development fees



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

AWAITING RESTORATION: Ontario Electric Railway Historical Association general manager Tom Twigge-Molecey examines the crumbling roof of a 1922 TTC streetcar. Awaiting restoration, it has long been exposed to the elements of the outdoors on the Guelph Line museum property.

By **Melanie Hennessey**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Hefty Town, Region and school board development fees have stopped the Halton County Radial Railway's expansion in its tracks, derailing two decades of fundraising efforts for the time being.

The Ontario Electric Railway Historical Association, which operates the railway museum in rural Milton, has been told it'll have to fork over \$94,000 in fees before it can build the Sir Adam Beck Centre — a 19,800-square-foot building that would house and preserve many historic railway cars that are currently sitting outdoors.

"We're basically up against a wall, and unless we get the rail cars inside very soon, there won't be anything left to restore in the future," said association general manager Tom Twigge-Molecey at a press conference Thursday morning.

"It is a disgrace that non-profit groups are required to pay development charges to provide facilities which benefit the public."

Former Ontario education minister and railway museum supporter John Snobelen joined in on the press conference and also decried the level of municipal fees, dubbing them "unreasonable" and "unconscionable."

"Charging development fees to a not-for-profit organization is intolerable," he said. "This has become like crack and cocaine to the GTA."

The association has raised \$425,000 for the project over the past 20 years. Site preparation, track work and continued fundraising efforts have used \$175,000 of that to date.

The building structure will cost \$250,000, and additional funds will be needed to enclose the building with a roof and outer walls.

But, Twigge-Molecey said public perception now is that any donations made will go toward development fees, not the museum.

"It's really put a stranglehold on our

ability to fundraise," he remarked.

He acknowledged that the project has received grants from the Milton Community Fund and Halton Healthy Community Fund.

"We're certainly very appreciative of the support we've received," he said. "But now, they're clawing it all back."

Mayor Gord Krantz, who Snobelen has met with on the issue, said he'd be receptive to waiving the fees for the museum, but questioned whether the Town has the jurisdiction to do so.

"I think that's a question that has to be answered," he said, noting it's provincial legislation that lays out the parameters for development charges.

Town Director of Corporate Services and Treasurer Linda Leeds told The Champion the Town's current development charge bylaw doesn't allow fees to be waived for non-profit groups.

"Basically we have to follow our bylaw — the same as anybody else," she said.

She noted if the Town wanted to exempt non-profit groups from devel-

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