

Regional councillors may amend DC indexing law

By Tim Foran
CANADIAN
CHAMPION STAFF

After a fractious seven-hour debate, one 86-year-old Oakville Councillor Fred Oliver described as "the most interesting" he's seen in his 23 years in Regional chambers, Halton council unanimously agreed Wednesday to a measure to support a struggling development industry but with no impact to property taxpayers.

The approved resolution directs staff to investigate by June an amendment to the Region's development charges (DC) bylaw that gives council the option to allow for quarterly — as opposed to annual — indexing of DCs.

Indexing, a common portion of municipal DC by-laws, allows for the municipality to raise DC rates by the amount of inflation as reported in the construction price index by Statistics Canada. The index, which kicked in yesterday, is based

on 2008 figures and increases development charges by 9.1 per cent, something the industry says is unrealistic in current conditions.

However, though the industry will pay rates for the next three months that might not truly reflect current construction prices, a quarterly index starting in June would allow the rates to be adjusted to a more recent and accurate figure, said Oakville Mayor Rob Burton, who crafted the motion along with Burlington Councillor John Taylor.

Burton added more significant assistance to the development industry is included in the second portion of the resolution endorsed by council. That calls for Regional staff to create an updated infrastructure financing plan that could eliminate the necessity for current residential developers to provide interest-free loans to Halton Region, to be paid by future developers, in the form of an up-front cash flow charge totalling about \$12,000 per new home,

according to Burlington Councillor John Taylor.

Those charges are required in the Region's current infrastructure financing plan approved by council last fall when staff felt the cash assistance was needed to cover \$2.5 billion in necessary capital projects to accommodate growth to 2021, much of which would have had to be completed in the next five years.

However, since that plan was passed, the economic recession has resulted in a slow down in building in Halton, and as of January only about half of the developers expected to request what are called allocations, essentially the extension of sewer and water pipes to their land, have actually asked for them from the Region. Therefore, it's possible the up front charges wouldn't be needed if infrastructure growth could also slow down, said Regional staff.

While council came to harmonious agreement at • see TAXPAYERS on page 10

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