

Committee supports zoning change to allow office

By Tim Foran
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

An application by the poultry processing plant Sargent Farms to convert a former Mill Street pub into an office building was endorsed by town council's planning committee Tuesday night.

If council approves the recommendation at its meeting Monday night, Sargent Farms will be allowed to move some of its office staff from its plant at 61 Garden Lane into both floors of 189 Mill St.

The chicken plant has said the transfer of employees won't result in an expansion of its industrial operation.

While Town staff see it as a simple zoning bylaw amendment allowing conversion from a first floor restaurant to an office, local resident Richard Laughton argued granting such approval is contrary to plans that govern the land — specifically the fact that it exists in a floodplain of the Sixteen Mile Creek.

In a submission to the committee, Laughton said that the restaurant was a legal non-conforming use, but that an office building represents a new use that is not allowed in floodplain areas. Once the restaurant ceased operation, the only allowable use for the property was for conservation, Laughton wrote in his submission.

Laughton said the Town should have been proactive in acquiring the site and using it for an addition to the parkland attached to the Mill Pond.

"They're taking a big step backwards in

my mind," said Laughton. "Let's convert it back to what it should be."

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz said while he'd happily accept the donation of floodplain-located properties to the town or conservation authority, he doesn't think spending tax dollars to buy buildings purely for demolition makes sense.

The Town's plans, as outlined in a staff

report from 2007, don't envision the conversion of buildings or parking lots in the floodplain to parkland.

Indeed, the report laments the fact that the depth and flow of the creek in downtown Milton is too high to allow for easy redevelopment and intensification.

Those environmental policies restrict construction of new buildings in empty lots

north of Main Street, for example.

However, Town staff said approving the conversion of The Dickens is a small way to keep the downtown to remain vibrant, as office uses are preferable to the building remaining vacant, according to its report to the planning committee.

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Not that easy to relocate businesses, says Town

The application by Sargent Farms to convert a restaurant into offices for its employees, at a building adjacent to its poultry processing plant indicates that it's there to stay, a fact that might prove hard for some downtown residents to accept.

Over the years, some residents have wondered why the Town hasn't pushed for the relocation of some older industrial companies to the new employment lands north of Hwy. 401.

For instance, in a recent interview with the *Champion*, Milton resident Bill Miller questioned why the Town allowed the Roxul plant on Harrop Drive to complete a \$135-million expansion of its operations over the past two years, including the construction of a new smokestack that rivals the water tower as a new marker of Milton.

Miller said the residential community south of Roxul has often complained of a strong egg smell wafting from the plant's

stack and filling up their pools with particulates every time the wind blows south.

"They started a beautiful industrial park north of the 401; these people (Roxul) should have gone there," Miller said.

A section of Milton's official plan states the Town should encourage such operations to move to new employment areas in order to reduce land use conflicts.

But that's easier said than done, said Town officials.

The Town's planning department said it has tried unsuccessfully several times in the past to have Sargent Farms relocate.

The company's plant, which began life as Halton Poultry, has been in old Milton since the Second World War. According to the company's website, it expanded 1,000 per cent from 1993 to 2008 and currently employs 125 people.

"We can't just march into Bob Sargent's office and say, move your plant," said Ward

2 Councillor Greg Nelson. "It's more complicated than that."

According to Andrew Siltala, from the Town's economic development department, the major obstacle for companies to relocate is that they have extensive plant equipment already in place and there would be a major impact on day-to-day operations from such an upheaval.

A secondary issue is that industrial land is simply not for sale, he said. Developers in the new employment parks prefer to lease properties rather than sell them.

The Town doesn't have land in new employment areas to give operations such as Sargent Farms, he added. And Milton Mayor Gord Krantz said he doesn't have a mandate to go out and acquire that land.

"One of the last things residents want is for me to go about spending the taxpayer's money to relocate these businesses," he said.



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

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National Access Awareness Week

May 24 to 30

The Town officially recognizes May 24 to 30 as National Access Awareness Week as part of its commitment to break down barriers for persons with disabilities.

As part of the Town's commitment to improving accessibility, the Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee, comprised mainly of persons with disabilities, is responsible for:

- Helping to ensure full access to those living in our community
- Advising Council on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of an annual accessibility plan

Did you know?

- Today, 15.5% of Ontarians have a disability. This number will grow as the population ages.
- Between 2001 and 2006, Ontario's population grew by about 7%, while the number of persons with disabilities increased by 22%.

The Focus on Accessibility Continues in June Recreation and Parks Month celebrations include:

- Free Special Needs Skate - June 15, 2:00 - 2:50 pm
- "Walk and Wheel" Challenge - All month long!



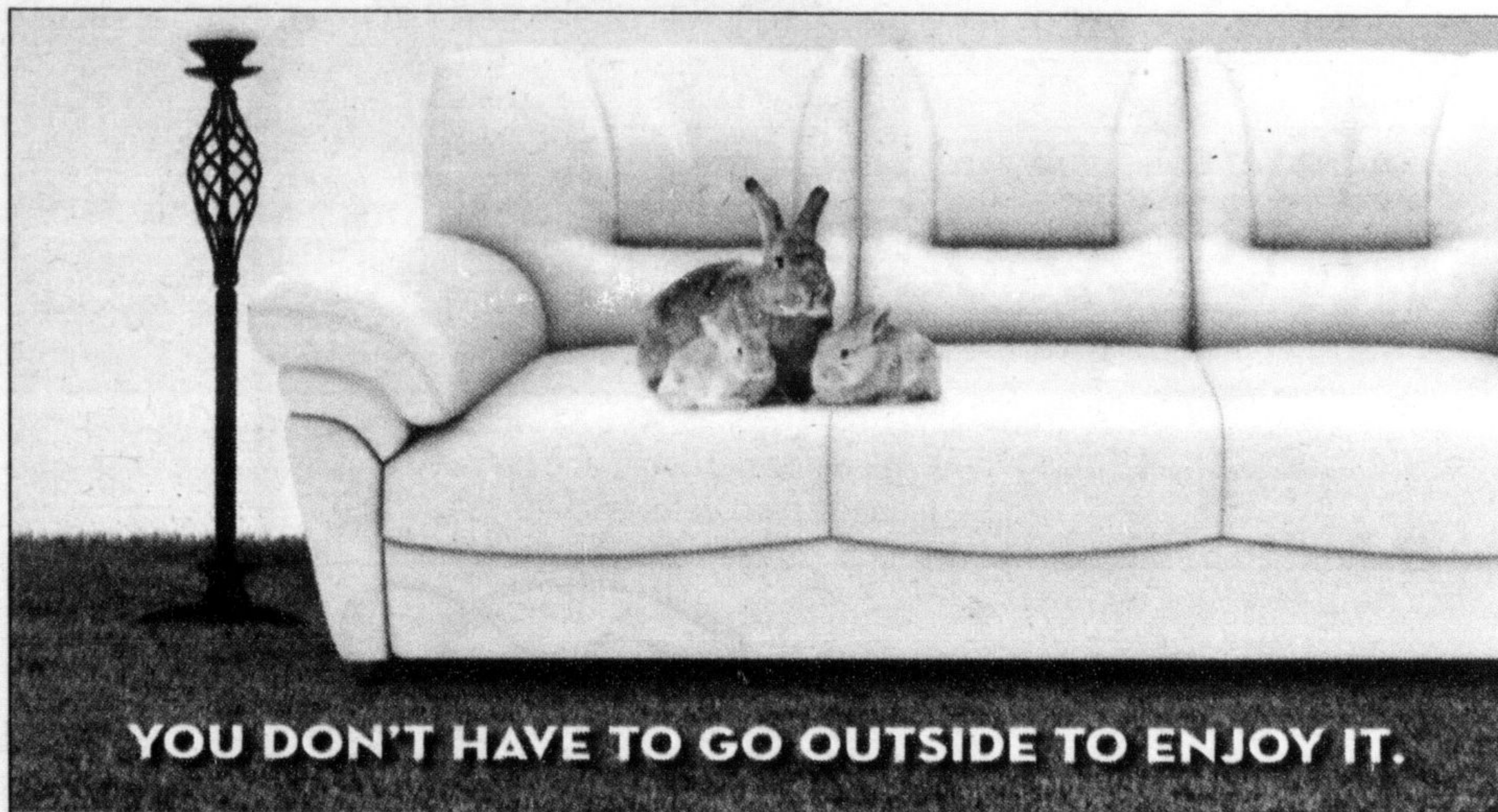
Increase Your Awareness About Accessibility

The 2009 Town of Milton Accessibility Plan can be found at www.milton.ca.

Refer to the Community Connections Map for a listing of playgrounds with accessible swings.

Find out how accessibility can enhance your business and details on compliance legislation at www.accesson.ca or www.mcass.gov.on.ca.

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