

Region considers services scheme

By Steve Arnold
A scheme to make developers pay the cost of water and sewer system expansions was unveiled for Halton councillors last week.
At a special joint meeting of the planning and public works and administration and finance committees, consultant Fred Koenig revealed the recommendations of the Master Servicing and Financing Scheme for water and sewer services in Oakville.
Although the scheme relates directly to massive development projects in Oakville, the policies it creates will affect future growth in all areas of the region.

Mr. Koenig, of Currie Coopers and Lybrand Consulting Ltd., told committee members that new development expected for Oakville in the next 20 to 30 years will require up to \$100 million in water and sewer services.
"The guiding principle of this entire scheme, he said, is to avoid hitting existing homeowners with the costs of expansion."
"The solution, as we see it, is to require the developers who trigger the need to front end the costs," Mr. Koenig added.
Basically, the plan presented by the consultant would require the first developer in an area to pay the entire cost of providing

water and sewer services in an area.
As later developers request building permits for their projects they would be assessed the usual lot levies and the first developer would be paid back for the excess capacity he paid to create.
Mr. Koenig explained that other possible solutions to the question would be for the region to sell debentures and retire the debts from lot levy funds or to approach the provincial government to front end the expansions.
"My discussions with provincial staff people indicate that the chances of achieving that are very slight indeed, but nevertheless it should be pursued," Mr.

Koenig said.
Committee members decided to refer the document to the provincial government for comments and possible financial assistance.
Mr. Koenig added that concerns raised by developers have centred around the risks that would be undertaken by the first builder to start.
He said the concerns of the developers, centred around the uncertainty of future development and about the "best efforts" clause of the agreement which requires the region to attempt to collect all appropriate subsidies and levies from other developers.
Other concerns centred around the interest costs that would have to be borne by the first developer as he waited for other projects to proceed.
"This interest cost," Mr. Koenig argued, "is an opportunity cost to the first developer for the chance to go first. It is clearly a component of a business decision made by the first developer."
The front ending requirement would apply only to developers with more than 100 units in their projects, he added.
"We chose this level because we want to avoid crushing small developers," he said.
In response to that proposal, Coun. Roy Booth (Halton Hills) argued that "we

could find ourselves looking at a lot of 99 unit developments in the future."
Mac Duncan, vice-president of Genstar Eastern Developments (the firm behind the massive Glen Abbey Development in Oakville) also drew attention to the interest costs his firm would face when building sewer facilities for which it won't be paid back for several years.
He noted that when a letter of credit is filed with the region a charge of one per cent of the amount covered by the letter is paid by the developer.
"But when the letter is drawn, developer A is suddenly paying 24 per cent for a facility to be used by someone else."

Final meeting called for day care comments

By Steve Arnold
A series of public meetings is being planned throughout Halton as a final effort to get public involvement in the recommendations of the region's day care study.
In a special conference recently held in Acton, Ann Mulvale, chairman of the subcommittee which supervised the preparation of the report, said the goal of the effort is to "get the public really involved."
"We want to show that we are serious about

getting public feedback," she said. "We're not just looking at the people that we have to serve, but at the role that the region is expected to play as well."
A preliminary version of the daycare study, tabled before the region's health and social services committee in June concluded that demands for day care services are going to increase by as much as 40 per cent in the next five years and Halton simply is not prepared for the deluge.
In addition the study concluded that Halton will be pressured to double or triple the amount of subsidized day care it provides.
Mrs. Mulvale said the five public meetings, to be held in Acton, Burlington, Oakville, Milton and Georgetown, are a response to questionnaires sent out during the preparation of the initial report "to be sure that we have been listening attentively."
"We have to be sure that we are very interested in providing services to the people of the region," she added.
Both Mrs. Mulvale and Norma Lepa, co-ordinator of the region's day care program, said there are a number of social factors leading to an increased demand for services.
These include rising divorce rates, the rising number of single parents and the need to get people out of the "welfare syndrome."
"These are needs that we just have to meet," Mrs. Mulvale said.
"We think it is much more cost effective to get someone off welfare and working, with the

assistance of some form of day care. It's much better for the children as well because otherwise we are just perpetuating the welfare syndrome," she said.
Mrs. Lepa said studies carried out in Toronto have shown that for every \$2 spent on providing day care, \$3 can be deducted from welfare costs for a net saving of \$1.
In Milton, for example, she said the development of the Milton-401 industrial park, the opening of a new GO station and upcoming home mortgage renewals are all going to make it easier and necessary for two family members to work and this will increase the demand for day care.
In Milton, she added, the region purchases day care services from two private operators but does not run a centre of its own.
A total of 18 children are placed in these centres and subsidized by the region.
Mrs. Mulvale also said that comments on the study are being sought from Matt Fischer, the region's director of business development.

"One of the ways to attract corporate expansion to the region is to provide a work force," she said. "It's very difficult to apply yourself to a job when you have that haunting doubt about what your child is doing when he gets out of school," she said.
Among the changes to the system being considered by the authors of the day care study is the possibility of having one regionally operated day care centre in each municipality and of some form of progressive cutoff of subsidies.
"It doesn't make sense for a mother in Halton Hills to have to drive to Burlington to get adequate day care," she said.
Mrs. Mulvale added that in addition to improved day care facilities the region is also hoping to introduce job retraining programs as a means of breaking the welfare syndrome.
"We have to provide that along with the day care otherwise the whole program is like a house of cards with no cards on the bottom level."
"I would expect that these changes will be important for their mental health benefits alone," she said. "It must be terrible to sit in a subsidized house with three kids and see nothing before you but a tunnel and no way of getting out of it unless someone dies and leaves you an inheritance."
Meetings will be held in Acton on Sept. 16 at the Acton Social Services and Information Centre; in Oakville on Sept. 17 at the Oakville Centennial Library; in Georgetown on Sept. 22 at the Gordon Alcott Arena; in Milton on Sept. 24 at the Milton Public Library and in Burlington on Sept. 29 at the Burlington Central Library.
All meetings are to start at 7 p.m. Questionnaires will be provided.



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