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Landowner has 30 days to save mobile home

By ROB KELLY

A peculiar exchange mixing compassion and impatience occurred at municipal council Monday night as politicians scolded a landowner who broke the rules, but empathized with the plight of his son.

Stanley Bowen owns a 60-acre farm in rural Milton. There is a mobile home on the property, in which his son Paul and wife, plus their four children, live. Such a dwelling is illegal.

Mr. Bowen spoke in his own defence, if it can be called that, at council, and basically admitted everything contained in a staff report by Milton bylaw enforcement officer Bill Bamford.

Mr. Bamford documented the history of the mobile home. In August, 1967 Paul Bowen was advised the home was illegal. It was ordered removed and he was told to petition council if he wanted an exception.

In October, 1988 the home was still there, a permit had not been acquired and a plywood addition to house the trailer's water system had been built. In November staff inspected the property and again ordered the home removed.

Stanley Bowen got a cool reception at council, to which he replied with what seemed to be an almost impenetrable shield of self-assuredness, even though he did not appear to have a legal leg to stand on.

Councillor Bill Johnson asked if the home was authorized by the Halton region health department.

"If it isn't, it will be," Mr. Bowen replied.

"It's not licenced," Mr. Johnson asked. "No," Mr. Bowen replied.

Mr. Johnson asked, "were you not aware that you needed one?"

"Yes," Mr. Bowen replied.

"You just disregarded it," Mr. Johnson said.

"No," Mr. Bowen replied, and was about to continue but Mr. Johnson cut him off. "Thank you," the councillor said curtly.

Unregistered mobile homes on unsevered lots do not pay taxes, thus do not support police, fire services or the school board. Councillor Les Laughren took Mr. Bowen to task for that.

Dr. Laughren asked, "you would not hesitate in calling the police and the fire department if you saw smoke coming from the mobile home?"

"Certainly I would not hesitate," Mr. Bowen replied. Councillor Laughren asked if any of Paul Bowen's children attended school and was told one did.

Councillor Rick Day, speaking in sharp tones of frustration, said the discussion was a waste of time given that the proper course of action would be for Stan Bowen to apply for a land severance.

Speaking to his motivation for keeping the mobile home operating in the face of official sanctions, the senior Mr. Bowen said he was simply trying to protect his son and his son's family.

"I guess you all are familiar with the lack of affordable housing. It's not easy for a young couple, especially with children."

"So make an application," Mr. Day cut in.

"I had to do something," Mr. Bowen concluded.

Mr. Day said the Bowens could have filled out the application anytime in the past 18 months. Because they had not, he indicated, events had come to the current unfortunate situation, in which a formal staff report had been tendered calling for removal of the mobile home.

"The only thing we have in front of us is the issue of whether to enforce (that) bylaw," Mr. Day said.

At that point Mr. Bamford joined in to say he would be "happy to assist Mr. Bowen in filling out the application."

Mr. Day asked, "we'll stay enforcement if they file an application?"

"Good common sense would indicate that," Mayor Gord Krantz replied.

Councillors voted to give the Bowens 30 days to file their application.