

Suggestion nice but won't work, planner says

By NORMAN NELSON

A suggestion by Milton regional councillor Bill Johnson to declare everything north of Regional Road 9 an environmentally sensitive area received the support of Halton's planning and public works committee on Wednesday.

Halton's planning commissioner, Rash Mohammed, on the other hand, was left burrowing his head deeply in his hands.

Such a wide area, he said, would never fit the rigorous criteria for the designation, and would not stand up to a challenge.

The proposal arose out of a special 'think tank' meeting in which councillors were discussing the course of Halton's future over the next 20 years.

The meeting was just one step in a long, involved process, initiated last year, to review Halton's Official Plan.

Must be reviewed

Provincial law stipulates that the plan, which plays a pre-eminent role in guiding all development in Halton Region, must be formally reviewed every five years.

The schedule for completing the official plan is flexible, but Halton's senior planner expects the mandatory formal public meeting to be held sometime this fall.

Meanwhile, he assured that there has been, and will continue to be, plenty of opportunity for public input.

Mr. Johnson's proposal was prompted by concern over the quantity and quality of underground water which serves the area, as well as other resources, such as trees and soil.

Halton presently has 38 official Environmental Sensitive Area (ESA) designations, including Brookville Swamp and nine others in Milton.

Mr. Mohammed, in an interview

after the meeting, said he appreciated what the Milton councillor was trying to achieve, but suggested other ways could be found to address his concerns.

Sniping session

Mr. Johnson also found himself in a sniping session with a Burlington councillor.

Pat McLaughlin objected to the

Milton councillor comparing Halton's fears that it may be "swallowed up" by Greater Toronto Area municipalities with Milton's own predicament in Halton Region.

"How has your community (Milton) been swallowed up?" he demanded to know.

"With respect to garbage" replied councillor Johnson, referring to the Region's successful effort to build its

dump in Milton. "And we have the worst roads in the Region."

Councillor McLaughlin disputed that Milton had been swallowed up, saying there's been no development in Milton since the inception of the Region. "It was already filled in when we got there."

Committee chairperson Marilyn Serjantson corrected that Milton's population had "increased by half."

"I'm sorry if Milton got disenfranchised along the way," retorted councillor McLaughlin.

For the most part, the meeting was like a fireside chat, with councillors musing about Halton's future.

Looks the same

Mr. Mohammed set the scenario, relating his experiences on a recent plane trip back from Ottawa. Over Toronto, he said the communities bled indistinguishably into each other. "I couldn't tell North York from the rest of Toronto."

Over Halton, however, he said the four municipalities clearly stood out, with perhaps a bit of bleeding on the Burlington/Oakville border.

Whether these communities continue to retain their individuality, he said, is a decision that Halton still controls.

Areas of discussion included urban development; jobs and housing; public and private transportation; Halton's role within the GTA; health and social services; farming and environmental issues.

New PC leader

Mike Harris drops in for chat

By SCOTT KLINE
Special to The Champion

The new leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservatives says his party faces several challenges as it gears up for an election.

The most difficult, Mike Harris said in an interview during his visit to the Halton North riding Sunday, is the Tories will be "breaking a cycle of the last 15 years in which we operated in a state of deficit financing."

Mr. Harris, 45, was in Acton for a breakfast meeting with local conservatives and their candidate, Dave Whiting. Liberal Walt Elliot holds Halton North.

Touting what he calls "a common sense approach to government," Mr. Harris said the party will work towards "attracting the very best men and women available" to be its candidates.

"If people are looking for a return to common sense in government, if they are looking to put the politics of the past behind them, they will find a home on this campaign team."

MPP for Nipissing since 1981, Mr. Harris last month became leader of a party that is reportedly \$4 million in debt and controls just 17 of the Legislature's 130 seats.

"I feel we have an approach to finding solutions that don't come from right wing or left wing politics," Mr. Harris said Sunday. "We have to do what makes sense."

He said that while only Premier David Peterson knows when an election will be called, "he has indicated he would like to go early" before the end of the Liberal five year mandate.

"(Peterson) was given a five-year contract but now wants to renegotiate," Mr. Harris said. "He does not have policies in place that can stand up for another year or two. I am 100 per cent confident that (Liberal) budgetary policies can't hold."

"Once people trust and believe that we are putting the policies and politics of the past behind us, I am very, very confident they will vote for us."

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