

Councillors' concerns over growth review too late — mayor

By ROB KELLY

As the stakes climb higher in the debate over when, where and how Milton should grow, political stances both for and against shovelling more money into town expansion plans are beginning to harden at Halton Region. And Monday night Milton councillors showed that they too are having a tough time arriving at any consensus regarding future growth.

Halton Region's planning commissioner, Rash Mohammed, appeared before council's general committee to brief elected officials on the next stage of the Halton Urban Structure Review. The review is a \$4.3 million study of detailed options for coping with an expected influx of 40,000 people once the town obtains new water and sewage utility servicing.

Although regional councillors have tentatively approved spending the \$4.3 million for a huge Milton growth study (at the committee level), it was only after a spirited and divisive debate. The plan was to go before the full regional council today (Wednesday), and Milton Mayor Gord Krantz predicted a rough ride. "It's going to be very close."

Mr. Krantz pushed for continuing with the study, despite the economic downturn that now has others hoping to halt it. And he probably would have appreciated a more united front from his fellow Milton elected officials in support of continued work in order to face down regional opponents. Instead, however, what he got mostly were reservations about the direction of the

study from his colleagues. Councillor Les Laughren fretted over the possibility that driving a water supply line up from Lake Ontario to fuel Milton growth, the so-called 'big pipe', would mean the well water supplies used today by most Miltonians would disappear. And he charged that the study direction is slanted toward dismissing the well water option.

"Why does the thrust of the document focus on termination (of well water supplies)?" asked Dr. Laughren.

"I don't believe the document focusses on termination," Mr. Mohammed replied.

"I hope that proves to be the case, that there is some interest in protecting what is there now," Dr. Laughren said. "I don't see it."

Milton council had asked the planning director to back preserving the well water system, through including a possible "dual system" in the study, one which would maintain well water for those already using it and provide Lake Ontario water to others. "I don't know if it's technically feasible or environmentally sound," Mr. Mohammed said. Therefore, he's willing to explore the possibility in the study but won't sanction creating such a system at this early stage.

Councillor Brian Penman worried that "we face the risk of politicizing the growth of Milton" as the Town faces off against the southern municipalities, Oakville and Burlington, at regional council. Some

southern tier politicians have balked at spending millions for Milton growth studies when their own constituents are still grappling with the effects of ongoing population booms.

As well, Mr. Penman said the study has expanded "significantly" to include north Oakville and that "I'm concerned... we have lost control."

Mr. Mohammed replied that north Oakville must be included in such a plan given the recent provincial announcement (by the outgoing Liberal

government) that Highway 403 through the area will be completed within eight years.

Mr. Penman appeared unconvinced that Milton is still master of its own destiny. "It will be other people (at regional council) voting, deciding, directing," he said. "There are some very significant risks."

Town administrator Roy Main, who interceded at three points during the discussion and appeared somewhat frustrated on more than one occasion by the direction of the

debate, told councillors that it is probably too late to willfully back out of the expansion studies anyway.

"The minute we initiated this process we knew what we were biting off," Mr. Main said. "We have exposed ourselves." If Milton withdraws from expansion studies now, there will inevitably be lawsuits launched against the Town by developers, he warned.

"Milton's future, its very existence is at stake," said Mr. Krantz. "To stand still is to go backward."



Photo by JOHN WARREN

Innovations on ice

The community open house at Milton Mall Saturday featured an ice skating demonstration. Here, (from left to right) Cheryl Richardson, Michael Shinniman and Peggy Ward show how it's done. Also showing off at the mall were sports, recreational, special interest and cultural groups whose representatives had a chance to drum up membership and participation. The event is run by Information Milton in cooperation with the Town's leisure services department.

Caribbean dance on Saturday

Tickets are still available for the fifth annual Caribbean Night Saturday. The event which includes island food and a variety of entertainment will be held at John Tonelli Sports Centre, 217 Laurier Ave., from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Tickets cost \$15 per person and can be obtained by calling Jim Powers at 878-6742 or Ron Furik at 878-2365, or at The Champion office, Bruce Hood's Milton Travel or Brancier Jewellers at Milton Mall. Proceeds will go to Milton District Hospital.

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