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Province gives more money to renovate Milton's Manor

By NORMAN NELSON

The last roadblock has been removed in planning for the redevelopment of Halton Centennial Manor in Milton.

Halton regional council, back in February, approved a plan to replace the aging 370-bed building with a modern 200-bed facility, but it was not until this week that it learned the Province has decided to support the full project, kicking in half of the expected \$21-million price tag.

Previously, the Province had supported a phased-in approach, approving only an initial 150 beds.

Halton Region social services commissioner Bonnie Ewart said that if the Province had stuck with that line, the Region would have had to downsize the project accordingly.

"This is fantastic news." The Region's consultants had recommended against phasing, which they said is costlier in the long run and more disruptive to patients.

The new manor is expected to open in mid-1992.

Consultants are working on detailed architectural drawings with a tender call expected by next spring.

The new facility is smaller for two reasons, Ms Ewart explained.

First, provincial policy clearly demands the "scaling down of the size of homes for the aged."

Huge monolithic institutions of the past have given way to smaller, more home-like facilities, she explained.

Second, she said regional council opted for a more "equitable distribution" of seniors' homes throughout Halton rather than the current centralized approach in Milton.

A smaller facility, with between 80 and 100 beds, is expected to come onstream in Burlington between 1993-95, followed by a third project in Oakville.

Regional council has set aside \$28.7 million over the next six years to completely fund (\$21.1 million) the 200-bed manor in Milton and to par-

tially fund (\$7.6 million) decentralization of the remaining beds.

Consultants are also working on a proposal outlining appropriate uses for the rest of the 20-acre Milton lot (the new manor will be housed on a five-acre lot).

Among the suggestions is that the Martin House be converted to about 60 senior citizens homes, and that parts of Pettit House — including the administration area, the chapel and the auditorium — be retained and made available for community uses.

Clash at Region meeting

from TEMPERS on page 1

With all the fixed costs — such as heat and telephones — he doubted whether such a move could actually save the required money.

"How would the Region like it if they had to shave \$10 million off their budget in the next eight weeks?" he asked bitterly in an interview after the meeting.

The issue surfaced during the budget deliberations earlier this year when the Region held back \$141,000 of its \$1.9 million funding to the HRCA, saying it was the Province — and not the Region — that owed the money.

The Region accuses the Province of underfunding the HRCA to the tune of about 6.5 per cent.

At Wednesday's council meeting, the issue quickly boiled down to whether fighting the Province was worth stepping on HRCA's shoes.

In the end, in the words of Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, council decided to "take a stand."

"It's not that the money (the \$141,000) is sitting in an account somewhere," she said. "We said 'no' to the Province... and we have to show that we're serious about saying 'enough is enough.'"

"We're drawing the line."

On the losing end of the debate, Burlington councillor Ralph Scholtens, who also sits on the HRCA board, pleaded for the authority not to be used in a battle that is strictly between the Region and the Province.

"The bottom line is that the conservation authority does have a legal

right to that money." It would be a shame, he said, if the Region ended up wasting taxpayers' money resolving the issue in court.

Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn agreed, saying if a court battle develops, "the \$140,000 will seem like peanuts."

A frustrated Murray Stephen, meanwhile, was left shaking his head outside the council chamber, having fared no better than he did at a planning and public works committee meeting the previous week.

"It's a debt owing from the Region of Halton to the conservation authority," he told reporters.

He lambasted regional representatives such as Burlington mayor Roly Bird, Tony Whitworth (Burlington) and James Grievé (Oakville) for suggesting the conservation authority tighten its belt.

The HRCA budget, he said, is determined by the 19-member board — not regional councillors.

"This is offloading from the Region on to the conservation authority."

Ironically, the HRCA is in complete sympathy with the Region's position.

At the committee meeting last week, Mr. Stephen said the 12 conservation authorities in the Toronto area are being underfunded by about \$5 million because of the Province.

But while Mr. Stephen would like to reverse that trend, he doesn't want to be part of a regional experiment geared toward seeing whether Halton can make the Province back down.

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