



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Restructure safeguard

We cannot in all good conscience take an informed position on whether or not the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) should have its powers slashed by transferring many of its responsibilities to regional government. But we advocate having a good, hard look at the matter.

The day has long passed when any government agency should escape such scrutiny. Taxpayers' money must serve its most effective use in this time of fiscal restraint. Waste is unacceptable, even immoral given the precarious circumstances many Canadians who are footing the tax bill face today.

A group called the Niagara Escarpment Landowners Coalition (NELC) is lobbying strongly to have the NEC stripped of its land use approval powers. Simply put, they would rather see regional governments, such as Halton's, making decisions as to what can or cannot be built on and around the Niagara Escarpment.

The NELC contends that the NEC was never intended to be a permanent entity, that it was set up to create policies for preserving the escarpment, and once those were in place, its work was to end. Instead, it has become in the minds of its opponents a self-perpetuating organization.

Although the NEC budget is 'only' about \$3 million a year, it inflicts \$7 million in costs on other government agencies that must comment on development proposals before the NEC, its detractors maintain.

Those who support the NEC charge that its critics have a hidden agenda, that they are largely developers interested in turning a quick profit.

The NEC supporters also say that without this umbrella organization, there would be no unity of planning or purpose along the Niagara Escarpment, a rocky ridge extending from Queenston to Tobemory.

If environmental control falls into the hands of the various regional and county governments holding sway over portions of the escarpment, the chain of preservation will only be as strong as its weakest link, and once that link has broken a precedent will be set for environmental havoc, they fear.

Both sides are probably overstating their respective cases in an attempt to solicit political support, but there are many matters that require examination here.

For example, the question of duplication. Government at all levels is rife with land use planners commenting on the plans of their counterparts. Halton Region has planners, all the area municipalities have them, and so do other agencies, like the NEC.

Granted, these people are there to safeguard the environmental rules, but do we need so many of them? They all spend time, as the NELC suggests, evaluating each others projects and getting paid for it. Do we need them at the NEC?

We also question whether the escarpment would dissolve into environmental chaos just because the land use approval function gravitated to regional government.

Regional government, in Halton anyway, is notoriously protective of its land use bible, called the Official Plan. We suspect it would be just as protective of NEC protocols. And scrapping NEC land use guidelines is not under serious contemplation — only changing who is responsible for them.

As for any alleged hidden agenda, who can say? The environmental controls, no matter who administrates them, are there to safeguard against abuses.

If there is money to be saved by whittling down the NEC, it should be done, but not at the expense of adequate provisions for preserving the escarpment.

LOOKING BACK



Ladies in long flowing gowns rushed to assist Louise Verrall when she dropped into Milton Department Store to buy a new pair of back-to-school shoes. Shown helping are Lois Cairns, Blanche Elliott, Harriah Servos, Lynda Servos, Chris Needham, Gladys Wilton and Helen Hilson. They were dressed up for the annual old fashioned days celebrations in September 1966.

PAGES OF THE PAST

One Year Ago

From the November 20, 1991 issue

□ The Santa Claus Parade had recently come to town and it was being touted as one of the best ever. Discount Car and Truck Rental's 'Jack in the Box' entry won the 'Toys on Parade' theme category. The Campbellville Business Association Float was the winner of the non-theme category. A total of 73 marching bands, majorette groups, walking groups and floats paraded past thousands of appreciative fans. In conjunction with the parade downtown businesses participated in a window decorating contest. The winner was Milton Greenhouses on Main Street.

□ The Milton District Hospital Foundation's "Tree of Caring" was to be lit up once again with the help of the public. To help pay for a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit, the Foundation was holding a Buy a Bulb for Your Hospital campaign. By selling the bulbs to light up the tree, members were hoping to raise \$20,000 to cover the cost. The tree was to be lit December 10. As a token for donations, a commemorative Christmas ornament was to be given to every donor. For donations of more than \$150, the hospital's tree was to get a large string of lights and the donor would get a limited edition satin ornament. For donations of \$50 to \$149 the donor was to receive a silver and blue tree-shaped ornament and the tree would be decked with a small string of lights.

□ The famous Kilbride artist, Albert Casson was to hand out signed prints at a show at the Harrop Gallery which included a broad selection of his works from both past and present.

20 Years Ago

From the November 22, 1972 issue

□ The strike was over at P.L. Robertson Manufactur-

ing Co. after production workers ratified a new two-year contract with an average 65 cents an hour wage increase. The first strike in the company's 64-year history lasted exactly one week. During the strike there had been no incidents. Pickets were head-quartered in a trailer parked in the company's Bronte Street parking lot. As it was clod and snow covered the ground, the men had bonfires going for warmth and picketing shifts were kept short.

□ There had been a "Halton County Night" at Mohawk Raceway and patron's of the track's dining room were made well aware of the fact. Warden Jim Swanborough went around sticking "Hi, I'm from Halton" lapel badges on everyone. Members of Halton County Council were guests of the Ontario Jockey Club for a dinner and after the Tecumseh Stakes, three county officials went to the winners' circle to present silverware to John Lester of Forest, owner of the stakes winner Atmos.

□ The Milton Chamber of Commerce had announced the popular Farmer's Market introduced during the summer would be returning for another year. At a recent meeting the Chamber had authorized the installation of a proper electrical service in the Mary Street parking lot for the coming year.

50 Years Ago

From the November 19, 1942 issue

□ The ladies of Bethel W.A. were to be holding their annual bazaar. Mrs. Skuce of Milton was to be the guest speaker.

□ There was to be a Card Party and Modern and Old Time Dancing for the benefit of the Red Cross at the Community Club on Bell School Line. Admission was 25 cents and lunch would be provided.

□ St. Paul's United Church would be holding their annual bazaar on December 5.

PUD

BY STEVE NEASE

