

Negotiations on hold during legal dispute over development charges

By **BRAD REAUME**
The Champion

Further negotiations on proposed increases in Halton Region's building development charges will wait until a legal matter between the region and the Development Charges Coalition has been resolved.

Julia Ryan, representing the coalition, again spoke to members of the administration and finance committee last week seeking a deferral of planned increases to Halton's non-residential development charges.

Charges are scheduled to increase on January 1, 1994 to \$2.13 per square foot from \$1.20. The money is used to offset the cost of installation of municipal services to new buildings.

Ms Ryan touched on many of the same points she made in her previous visit to the committee last month.

Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy suggested the motion to cease dis-

cussions with the coalition until a legal matter between them is concluded. Though it has been treated as a confidential item, it is known that the coalition appealed the increase in development charges to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

"The intent of the motion is to put pressure on the coalition," said Mr. Pomeroy. The coalition has been using the OMB hearing as a threat to force the region's hand, but now that the region refuses to consider the issue until the hearing, councillors feel they have reversed the pressure.

Ms Ryan told the committee that businesses considering locating in Halton have to take the development charges into account as one of the numerous costs of doing business.

"Companies are deterred by a lack of competitiveness in Halton and Halton loses jobs, assessment, taxes and the associated economic

spinoffs," Ms Ryan said. "If you discourage business you'll lose a lot more than just the small amount you might gain with a few businesses paying the higher charges."

Mr. Pomeroy seemed to sympathize with the development industry, saying he'd received several calls claiming the charges were a major deterrent to building. However, he noted that building resales are quite healthy in Halton.

Burlington Mayor Walter Mulke-wich said he understood the arguments on both sides of the issue. He said it would be nice if the hike in charges could be used to fund economic development.

"If we want to subsidize building charges, so be it," said Oakville councillor Keith Bird. "Let's find out the real costs of building. If we subsidize that's okay, but let's let the public know."

Waiting list, vacancies occur simultaneously in day care

It is possible for child daycare waiting lists and vacancies to exist in Halton at the same time, according to a report tendered recently by Bonnie Ewart, Halton Region's social services commissioner.

Ms Ewart says in her report that since 1988 vacancy rates in Halton have been as high as 15 per cent and as low as 2 per cent. Vacancies and waiting lists co-exist because of the nature of most centres, which serve a certain geographical area and a specific age group.

Currently there are 529 children on the daycare waiting list. At the same time there are 192 vacant spaces. In Milton there are 33 vacant spaces and 10 children on the waiting list.

Child care spaces in Halton have increased 58 per cent to 4,713 licensed spots in the last seven years, Ms Ewart's report indicates.

In addition, there are an estimated 17,000 informal child care spaces serving Halton. Those informal spaces make up about 87 per cent of all the available spaces in Halton.

The vacancy rate for licensed spaces is about 7 per cent across the region, the commissioner said.

More child care spaces are expected to be created in 1994, with plans and funding for some already in place. A French language daycare is proposed to open in Georgetown in 1994.

Church holds special dinner Christmas Day

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