

Region forges compromise over development charges

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
The Champion

Halton opened the door to development and closed it on a \$1 million

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Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) battle by passing a new development charge bylaw at regional council last week.

The bylaw lowers development charges, particularly for industrial/commercial growth.

After three years of debate — and negotiations with a development coalition appealing the region's 1991 bylaw to the OMB — councillors steered discussion away from the threat of OMB costs and toward Halton's economic competitiveness.

Debate will continue though, since council endorsed further study of development charge exemptions for existing businesses' expansions. There is currently a redevelopment (under 5,000 sq. ft.) exemption. Last week's wrangling stretched

over a special administration and finance committee meeting and into regional council on June 29, where the bylaw, approved in principle May 4, came to a recorded vote with only two dissenters, Burlington Councillor Bob Wood and Oakville Councillor Kevin Flynn.

The bylaw lowers residential charges by 9.7 per cent from \$5,212 to \$4,706 on single-family detached units.

30 per cent reduction

It also gives close to a 30 per cent reduction on non-residential charges, effectively lowering charges from \$3.15 per sq. ft. of gross floor area to \$2.28 — still a 15 per cent increase over the recent \$2.13 per sq. ft. charge.

"Any way you cut it, this is subsidizing the development industry," said Mr. Flynn, the bylaw's strongest critic, who called it the result of "three years of deal-making."

"The original aim of the development charges legislation was that the development industry would be

paying its fair share. If we agree with this compromise, the development industry would be paying less than its fair share," he said.

Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale warned that, "the expense of the development charge under appeal puts us at real financial risk." She supported the "compromise" and said, "if you want to do something to perfection you may as well put the sign out 'Gone Fishing' because it's not going to happen." However Mr. Flynn retorted, "if we put a sign out, I hope it's 'Gone Fishing' and not 'Gone Broke'."

Regional lawyer Mark Meneray said it would cost at least \$1 million to defend the region's 1991 bylaw.

Flynn alarmed

Mr. Flynn said he was "alarmed" at revealing to the region's legal adversaries its potential defence costs.

"I think the big winners here are the development industry and the big losers will be the ratepayers," said Mr. Flynn.

But the so-called compromise had strong support.

"To say industry people are getting a free ride, I don't buy that," charged Halton Hills Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson, noting local residents want to work locally.

Burlington Councillor Bob Brechin said he believed developers pass their costs on in the price of homes and thus favoured lower charges.

Milton Councillor Brad Clements said it's necessary to compare residential and non-residential charges, that the average house pays \$1 per sq. ft. while non-residential costs \$3 per sq. ft.

Taxpayers Coalition secretary Dr.

Gerald King criticized the process, which he said "seems to have degenerated into negotiations between developers' groups and regional staff under the threat of an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. The residents' voice has been muted." Dr. King said taxpayers were represented in the 1991 bylaw's development but not in recent negotiations.

Dr. King suggested foregoing half the almost 30 per cent non-residential discount, saying the initial 14.8 per cent reduction was substantial and should satisfy developers.

Oakville Councillor Keith Bird queried "other breaks" for developers such as the conversion of vacant industrial/commercial properties to other temporary zoning status for tax breaks. Only a provincial Assessment Act amendment could close the loophole, staff said, and Regional Chair Peter Pomeroy suggested developers were businesses people who couldn't be faulted for pursuing an existing loophole.

Mr. Pomeroy said development charges were putting Halton in a "non-competitive situation."

For example, Durham Region and Barrie have no development charges and are marketing that to developers. "It is a barrier, a competitive disadvantage. There are others but this is the major one," said regional business development director Brent Kearsse.

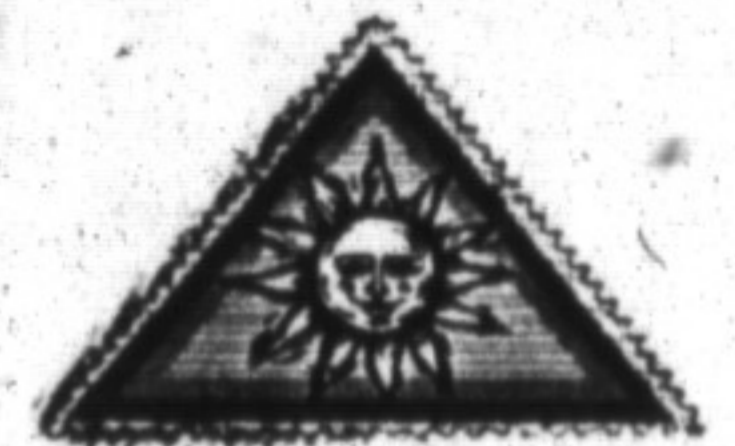
Halton has six million sq. ft. of vacant commercial-industrial space and half of it is "dysfunctional" or has environmental problems, said Mr. Kearsse. Dr. King criticized offering discounts for developers to create more vacant buildings.

* Please see related story on page 5

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TENDER CALL

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**REPLACEMENT OF FIFTH LINE BRIDGE OVER BLUE SPRINGS CREEK
CONTRACT NO. PW-08-94**

Tenders, on forms supplied by the Consulting Engineers or the Director of Public Works will be received in sealed envelopes, clearly marked as to contents, by the Town Clerk, Victoria Park Square, 43 Brown Street, Milton, Ontario until 2:00 p.m. local time on:

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 1994

for the replacement of Fifth Line Bridge over Blue Springs Creek.

Plans, Specifications and Form of Tender may be obtained at the office of the Consulting Engineers in Mississauga, 2655 North Sheridan Way, or from the Town of Milton for the sum of fifty dollars (\$50.00 includes G.S.T.) which will not be refunded.

Each tender must be accompanied by a certified cheque for \$20,000 and the successful bidder must provide a Performance Bond and a Labour and Material Payment Bond by an approved guarantee company for 100% of the total tender. The lowest or any tender will not necessarily be accepted.

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Consulting Engineers
2655 North Sheridan Way
Mississauga, Ontario
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Mr GORDON KRANTZ
Mayor
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Director of Public Works
THE CORPORATION OF
THE TOWN OF MILTON

BUILDING & ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT

The Town of Milton has an opening for a General Secretary I on a five month contract basis, 3 days per week, beginning July 25, 1994 and ending December 31, 1994. Applications for this position will be received up to and including July 13, 1994.

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Experience and Qualifications:

- Knowledge of WordPerfect 5.0 essential
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Town of Milton
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PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES CONCERNING THE TOWN OF MILTON OFFICIAL PLAN FRAMEWORK OPTIONS

The Town of Milton will be holding two (2) informal open houses in the Town Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. on July 13 & 19, 1994 to receive public input concerning the framework options (draft) for the new Official Plan.

The options have been developed in concert with the Town's Strategic Plan.

Any person may attend either of the open houses and/or make written or verbal comment with respect to the options.

As of July 4, 1994, the options will be available for viewing within the main foyer of the Town Hall, Victoria Park Square and additional information is available from the Planning and Zoning Department between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.