

Residents complain of too many group homes

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
The Champion

It may not be a NIMBY (Not in my backyard) issue but it's definitely a Not too many in my backyard issue when it comes to group homes, or de facto group homes, in Milton.

"I'm hopping mad and so are my neighbors," said Halton Avenue resident Chris Watters Monday at council.

Two dozen residents were out to blast the Town about a provincial law, which overrides municipal bylaws and has paved the way for

two homes to house disabled persons in the Forest Grove area of Ontario Street, less than 1,000 feet apart.

Residents told council there are rumors other area properties are being investigated as possible homes. "That concerns me," said Ward 2 Councillor Brad Clements, asking staff to investigate.

The Town's bylaws stipulate a group home can't locate within 1,000 feet of another group home.

However, by strict definition of a group home — six to 10 persons — and the province's new definition of family — five human beings living

in a single dwelling — the new proposed home of four persons isn't one.

In 1992 a group home located at 340 Ontario Street. Now residents have learned a second, not technically a group home, is being purchased.

"At 340 Ontario Street we have five or six young individuals in need of constant care. Now we have a somewhat similar situation occurring a block away. We find it impossible to understand this is not a group home," said Mr. Watters.

"This is a vague attempt to work around the regulations. If this goes through it means there are no regulations," added Mr. Watters.

"As a council, I think you should tell the rest of the community your bylaw should not be read to be understood because it doesn't mean what it says," said Campbell Avenue resident Jim Dills.

Deborah's Home is awaiting final Ministry of Housing funding, said board of directors chair Paul Lingen. It will house four disabled north Halton people in a house at 250 Ontario Street, to be renovated at the corner of Ontario Street South and Campbell Avenue.

"Nobody is saying not in my backyard. I have no problem with such a



Jim Dills

facility in a neighborhood. The problem is how many should be in a neighborhood," said Ward 2 Councillor John Challinor.

"If it squawks like a duck, walks like a duck, and looks like a duck, it is a duck," said Mr. Challinor, adding "We have the potential of neighborhoods made up entirely of these facilities."

However, "I don't see this issue as Deborah's Home. I'm supportive of Deborah's Home and the kind of ser-

vice they want to provide," added Mr. Challinor.

Council supported his bid for a review of Milton's zoning bylaw on so-called group homes.

He also asked the Town tighten its group home definition, that new home proponents be required to submit plans to the Town, and the Province give advance notice of funding applications for such facilities.

The Town will also attend a public meeting on the proposed 250 Ontario Street project September 8 at the Milton Leisure Centre.

"I can empathize and understand deeply the concerns and fears of the residents of the neighborhood we're proposing to locate in and I know it sounds hollow, but we're going to do everything we can to be part of this community," said Mr. Lingen.

Ward 2 Councillor Rick Day pinned the blame on the Province.

"Please don't anyone go out of here and blame anyone on this council for this. It's not us. It's the Province of Ontario," said Mr. Day.

Critical councillors noted Bill 120, or what Mr. Day called "the basement apartment" law, now allows two family units to occupy a single family home.

Town slaps wrists of protestors

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
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A large portable sign had no sooner gone up on Martin Street resident Josephine Clark's front lawn then it came down after a town bylaw enforcement officer visited Friday.

Around 8 a.m. Friday, Martin Street resident and D & S Signs owner Roman Jirasek donated the portable sign to the cause of Martin Street residents fighting municipal plans to widen the street between Woodward Avenue and Main Street.

Around 9 a.m. the sign was on Ms Clark's front lawn at 174 Martin Street. By 11 a.m., Ms Clark had completed its lettering to read "Save Martin Street's Historical Character" and "Repave. Yes. OK. Oui. Three Lanes, No Way." Shortly after noon, Town of Milton bylaw enforcement officer Ian McNally arrived on the scene. With the cooperation of the newly formed Martin Street citizens' committee, the lettering was removed and the sign eventually hauled away.

"It's hilarious," said Ms Clark, kept busy putting up, and taking down, the sign's lettering.

Mr. McNally said he appreciated the residents' cooperation.

"They do have an issue but I like their attitude, the way they're handling it," he said, explaining residents had a point of view to express but didn't want to contravene the law.

The sign had to come down because no one had gotten a permit for it, he said.

"I'm not at liberty to comment on whether they would get the proper permit for that type of sign," said Mr. McNally, adding it may be unlikely since it was erected in a residential area, which would require involvement of the municipal zoning department.

Mr. McNally had no problem with smaller signs erected earlier last week on the front lawns of a couple of Martin Street residences, including Ms Clark's.

Residents are continuing their opposition to any plans to widen Martin Street.

The town is currently reviewing the issue, after council turned it back for more study when residents opposed a plan to widen the street between Main Street and Woodward Avenue to three lanes.

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