

Milton offers lukewarm support for challenge

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
The Champion

Milton council put its money where its mouth was two weeks ago, at least to a point, giving a \$1,000 grant to London, Ont. towards a court challenge of a new provincial law legalizing apartments in houses. But councillors apparently don't want to go beyond that stage.

"The potential is there to almost double the size of the community within the capacity of existing homes," warned Ward 2 Councillor Brad Clements, noting possible impacts on services, particularly water and sewer, which are already near capacity usage in Milton.

"Bill 120 is history," said dissenting Ward 2 Councillor Art Melanson, against the move and asking for a recorded vote. Only he and Ward 3

Councillor Gerry Brooks rejected the funding idea.

The Residents' Rights Act (Bill 120) became law July 14, legalizing one apartment dwelling per residence in Ontario — making legal many illegally existing basement apartments and granny flats.

Ward 2 Councillor John Challinor instigated the move to help London in challenging the bill, saying it could effectively double Milton's population.

Councillor Melanson disagreed. "Bill 120 extended protection to residents living in illegal apartments. Now those tenants have the same rights as other tenants. There are some very vulnerable people living in basement apartments."

He said the law also satisfied people who want an apartment in their home. The councillor said the law

addressed concerns of risk to health, life and safety.

Mr. Challinor, echoing his earlier stand, said the new law "threatens to dramatically change the character of Milton's existing neighborhoods and the unique quality of life enjoyed by Milton residents." He said it could increase demands for on-street parking, water and sewage capacity, library and leisure services, schools and health services.

Milton chief administrative officer David Hipgrave said the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) recently considered contributing to

London's legal fund, however opted not to do so.

Mayor Gord Krantz said, "I want to make it clear the reason for this being a grant is that we don't want this municipality to be party to a class action suit." Mr. Krantz did say the Town was putting its money where its mouth is on the issue.

London's preliminary legal costs run to \$30,000, so the city sought financial support from other Ontario municipalities.

In conjunction with Bill 120, new rules were added to both Ontario's fire and building codes. Tenants in

apartments in houses now have the same rights as other Ontario tenants and if they feel their apartment is unsafe, can take action without fear of eviction.

Homeowners must ensure their apartments meet safety standards. Smoke alarm installation was to be done by August 13 with other minimum standards to be met within two years.

Mr. Challinor said he doesn't believe the new law enforceable, with nothing to force owners to upgrade, and said not many people were coming forward to have inspections done.

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