

HRCA faces \$2-million budget slash following cuts

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Caused largely by provincial funding cuts, the Halton Region Conservation Authority (HRCA) struck its 1996 budget at \$4.36 million, down almost \$2 million from 1995.

Modest increases to user fees, 10 staff layoffs and no capital projects characterize the austerity budget, described by HRCA general manager Murray Stephen as a stop gap measure until government and funding issues are clarified.

"It's a stop gap measure. We can't make decisions based on assumptions of what various governments will do," said Mr. Stephen. "One situation leads to another. It's unpredictable."

The province, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, has reduced grants to the HRCA by \$1.7 million, according to Mr. Stephen.

Entrance fees have increased 50 cents across the board with additional fee increases for campers, rock climbers, and for the purchase of firewood.

The HRCA has approved the budget, however, local municipalities who help fund the Authority have not yet finalized their budgets. According to Mr. Stephen, it is possible revenues might fall short of expectations. However, he added, he had not heard any suggestions from the municipalities that there would be reductions.

The HRCA has requested \$1.83 million from Halton Region, down 7.5 per cent from almost \$2 million received in 1995. The Authority also requested about 7 per cent less from Peel Region and 10 per cent less from Hamilton-Wentworth both of which are minor

funding partners. Funding from these sources totals just over \$200,000.

"Bill 26 eliminated our ability to levy local municipalities," said Mr. Stephen. "Capital projects have been eliminated. We are waiting for announcements regarding local governance and we have to agree to a funding plan with local municipalities."

Mr. Stephen said plans for several capital projects have been abandoned including an erosion control project in Oakville and work in connection with Highway 403 and Rambo Creek in Burlington.

The Authority completed work on the Hagar-Rambo Creek flood water project in 1995.

"In a year the Authority will be substantially different from what it was," said Mr. Stephen. "We have a restructuring review that we are undertaking and hope to implement for 1997. The whole thing with the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) stands in the way. Regulations on Bill 26 are still coming out and the level of municipal funding support is up in the air."

"The budget cuts have not changed our commitment to managing the environment on a watershed basis," said Brian Penman, HRCA chair. "A conservation authority is still the best way municipalities within a watershed can make collective resource conservation decisions on a watershed basis."

The HRCA owns and manages more than 8,000 acres of significant natural lands. Five primary conservation areas provide recreational opportunities to more than 500,000 visitors a year, including more than 100,000 skiers at Glen Eden. The authority is also responsible for flood control, wetland protection and protection of Niagara Escarpment lands.

Less taxes may spur investment

• from TAXES on page 1
council if necessary.

"I don't want to see money just left in the budget waiting to be spent. I'd like to see a stabilization fund," he said.

Earlier in budget deliberations, Mr. Dennison made reference to funds being spend on new lights for council chambers and on general maintenance of the Regional Administration Building on Highway 25. Mr. Rinaldo explained lights in the council chambers were no longer being manufactured and replacement lightbulbs are getting more difficult to find. He also said that \$100,000 was a rather small amount to be allocated to the maintenance of a building the size of the Halton's headquarters.

In addition, a compromise was reached with the Halton Regional Police Service, which deferred the hiring of 10 new constables until August, saving \$309,000 from their proposed \$39 million budget.

Prior to the compromise, the Region's proposal called for \$665,800 less funding than the police requested.

Regional chair Joyce Savoline told committee that maintaining a tax freeze in light of major cutbacks in grants from the provincial government was a difficult task.

Curlington councillor Bob Wood called for broader public involvement in the budget striking process. Halton's chief administration officer John Burke pointed to a previous citizen-driven document, which identified important budget areas for Halton residents and suggested the committee be set to work again.

"It's not only possible it's desirable," said Mr. Burke. "Now that fiscal crunches are getting more substantial there will be impacts on things that have been previously identified as important. Those things are not static."

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RELEASE OF ADDITIONAL SERVICING CAPACITY EXISTING MILTON URBAN AREA

The Region of Halton is in the process of considering a partnership to provide additional waste water servicing capacity in the existing Milton Urban Area. A new area-specific wastewater development charge by-law for the existing Milton Urban Area will be required to recover the costs of providing additional servicing capacity at the Milton Wastewater Treatment Plant.

A Public Information meeting has been arranged for:

DATE: Wednesday, April 3, 1996

TIME: 10:00 A.M.

LOCATION: Lions Club Hall
Milton Memorial Arena
(77 Thompson Road south of Main Street East)

Information will be provided on the amount of servicing that is to be made available, the new area-specific development charge and the process for securing an allocation under the future release of additional servicing capacity.

For further information, please call the Planning and Public Works Department and ask for Ruth Victor at (905) 825-6161, Extension 7183 or (905) 878-8113, Extension 7183.



JOAN A. EAGLESHAM
REGIONAL CLERK

PRE-CONSTRUCTION PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION OF GUELPH LINE (REGIONAL ROAD #1) FROM HIGHWAY 401 TO 240 M NORTH OF NO. 10 SIDEROAD TOWN OF MILTON PR-928A

A Pre-Construction Public Information Centre will be held:

DATE: Thursday, April 4, 1996
TIME: 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
PLACE: Campbellville Lions Club (Upstairs)
Guelph Line
Campbellville, Ontario

The Regional Municipality of Halton proposes to reconstruct Guelph Line (Regional Road #1) from Highway 401 to 240 metres north of No. 10 Sideroad in the Town of Milton. This portion of Guelph Line will be reconstructed to a 2 lane semi-urban roadway with a centre turn lane between Highway 401 and the second entrance to Mohawk Raceway (Gate #2). In addition, separate northbound/southbound left turning lanes will be constructed on Guelph Line at the intersection of No. 10 Sideroad. This work is scheduled to proceed in early Summer of 1996.

This Pre-Construction Public Information Centre will be of specific interest to those owners and tenants whose properties front onto Guelph Line within the construction limits. Final design plans will be available for review by the public. This will be an informal meeting where interested members of the public will be able to drop in at their convenience to discuss construction related matters with representatives of the Region.

If you are unable to attend this Pre-Construction Public Information Centre and have questions regarding the project, please contact:

Mr. D.K. Inouye, CET
Manager, Construction Services
Regional Municipality of Halton
1151 Bronte Road
OAKVILLE ON L6M 3L1
Telephone: (905) 825-6000/878-8113

JOAN A. EAGLESHAM
REGIONAL CLERK

