

## Mayors show off website

from GTA MAYORS on page 3  
 where everything is being put into place for the transactional phase, which we are just beginning to see," said Mr. Vassos. "That is where you can actually do business on the 'net'."

Mayors expressed some concern as to when several panels of the Who Does What municipal reform study group would report. All reports are expected by the end of November, with the property tax recommendations likely the last to be filed.

The idea to pool commercial property taxes, and use them to pay for education across the province has not been thoroughly investigated but it is on the agenda, according to Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, who sits on the tax assessment panel.

Given the pooling idea and another plan to have municipalities take over the building and maintenance of schools, Brampton Mayor Peter Robertson questioned if there could be a fundamental change to the way municipalities are organized.

He suggested that municipalities traditionally engage in business development, but if the province pooled all the tax assessment from business there would be no advantage in soliciting firms to move to a given area.

Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale disagreed saying "municipalities are engaged in building and sustaining communities" which means they need businesses to employ the people who live in the communities.

A visit by Raymond Protti, president of the Canadian Bankers Association elicited some ill feeling from the mayors, who used the opportunity to pass on complaints by small business regarding the banking industry.

Mr. Protti said 80 per cent of those companies which received loans approved of the service they were receiving from their financial institution.

Mr. Protti told the mayors the GTA boasts 190,000 bank employees and pays huge taxes to municipalities. However he said, increasingly borders are meaningless in the banking industry, technology is changing the face of banking and there is a consolidation among financial institutions taking place.

A federal banking task force, he added, will look at competition among banks, through the nature of financial products and regulations which govern the industry.

The next monthly GTA mayors meeting is slated for the City of York on November 15.

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# Lobbyist: High charges 'killing construction'

By BRAD REAUME  
 The Champion

High development charges stifle building activity, according to a representative of the development industry.

Mike Bryan, chair of the Halton Region Development Charges Coalition, has told regional officials for months that high development charges are killing the construction industry in Halton, and doing damage to associated businesses. He repeated his message last week to members of the region's administration and finance committee as they debated an increase in those same charges.

The small increase, to cover inflation, has been proposed only for residential construction. The committee agreed commercial and industrial charges should remain unchanged. However, they requested more information about fees in sur-

rounding municipalities before making a decision. The issue will be debated again in several weeks.

"A cynic would say you see some life in residential construction so you want to raise rates," said Mr. Bryan to the committee. "Our growth rates have been similar to 1994, but are nothing like they were in the past."

Mr. Bryan complained of huge increases in development charges - as well as additional levies from school boards - all passed on to the home purchaser. He warned Halton is "killing the economy."

Acting chief administrative officer Joe Rinaldo told the committee that in-depth studies of the charges were probably not wise because provincial legislation on development charges is expected soon.

"(The residential development industry) is a factory which creates work for others," said Burlington Councillor Ralph Scholtens. "There is

furniture to be bought, curtains and many other products. Work needs to be created to generate taxes. We don't want to nip growth in the bud."

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz argued if the costs of a new home are not borne by the buyer, then they will be by all taxpayers in the form of increased property taxes.

Oakville Councillor Kevin Flynn said that decreasing development charges amounts to a subsidy by property taxpayers to stimulate private business, a situation he called, "not right."

"I like growth. Every new lawn is a potential sprinkler system," quipped Mr. Flynn, who sells sprinklers. "However, I can't see subsidizing private industry through low development charges."

Committee heard it will be foregoing about \$14,000 per month in additional development charges by holding the decision aside to gather more information.


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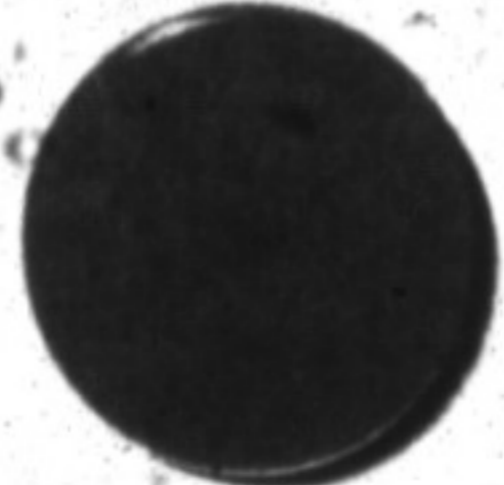
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