

Hydro think tank gets frosty greeting

700 people jammed hotel to hear authority's plans

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

It was the first public meeting for the newly created Ontario Power Authority, but it was the same old story for Markham and Aurora residents battling to keep hydro transmission towers out of their back yards.

More than 700 people jammed a hotel ballroom in Richmond Hill Wednesday night to provide a baptism of fire for the inaugural public meeting of the authority and its vice-president of power system planning, Amir Shalaby.

The first job given the power authority — created by the province to ensure an adequate supply of electricity in Ontario — is the future power supply to northern York Region, a project that has been generating nothing but controversy since last spring.

Many of the people who attended the meeting and peppered Mr. Shalaby with pointed questions and occasional jeers were from neighbourhoods that would be affected by Hydro One's proposal for a line of transmission towers along a 24-kilometre corridor from Markham to Newmarket.

EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

Although Mr. Shalaby said repeatedly the authority will evaluate a variety of alternatives, residents, who have been fighting the transmission line for more than a year, indicated frustration at having to present their concerns again.

"We have raised numerous concerns from the beginning about the health risks of (electromagnetic fields), real estate and esthetic problems, but they have never been addressed," said Sue Fusco of Stop Transmission Lines Over People.

"We're not certain, even now, that our concerns will be heard. We have sent some fundamental questions to the (power authority) requesting replies. The onus should be on utilities to prove the safety of their proposals, not on the public to prove the harm," the Markham resident said.

Hydro One never seriously considered any other option, Markham Regional Councillor Jack Heath told the gathering.

SAME RESULT

"Why shouldn't we expect the same result from the (power authority) as with Hydro One? Will the result be the same?" Mr. Heath asked.

There is no relationship between Hydro One and the authority, Mr. Shalaby said.

"We're separate, different. We're planners, they're suppliers. This process has a broader scope; we'll be looking at other options."

The day following the meeting, Mr. Shalaby said residents' anger and frustration were understandable.

"They are skeptical because of what has happened in the past," he said.

"It was quite emotional at times, but many of those people are tired of coming to public meetings."

"Even though we are broadening the mandate, some would say we're just going over the same ground."

The authority plans to set up a working group of residents, staff at York

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Stop Transmission Lines Over People

Region and area municipalities, environmental groups, businesses and both school boards to discuss options.

Mr. Shalaby said he hopes to make a recommendation to the Ontario Energy Board by September on the best solution to provide electricity.

The authority will hold another public meeting in the northern part of the region, probably in Newmarket, before the end of May.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

Take Notice that on Thursday, June 2, 2005, the Finance and Administration Committee of The Regional Municipality of York will hold a public meeting pursuant to the Development Charges Act, 1997 regarding the proposed amendment to development charge rates and policies that will be applied throughout the Region of York. This proposal will reflect prospective changes to Development Charge By-law No. DC-0005-2003-050. It is proposed that enactment of a Development Charge By-law Amendment by Regional Council would occur on a date subsequent to this public meeting.

Development charges are levied against new development, and are a primary source for funding growth-related capital expenditures. Regional capital services include water, wastewater, transportation (roads, transit) and general services (police, long term care, health, public works).

Regional Council is required under the Development Charges Act, 1997 to hold at least one public meeting to allow the public an opportunity to review and provide comments on the supporting documentation of the By-law amendment.

All interested parties are invited to attend on:

Thursday, June 2, 2005, 9:00 a.m.
Region Administrative Building

Committee Room A
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario

Copies of the 2005 Development Charges By-law Amendment Background Study, related staff reports, and the proposed By-law amendment will be available through the Regional Clerk's office by May 18, 2005.

Written submissions are invited and should be directed to S.G. Cartwright, Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer, by no later than 4:30 p.m. on May 26, 2005. Inquiries should be directed to the Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer. Anyone wishing to address Committee on the above-noted matters should advise Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk at (905) 830-4444, ext. 1300, by 4:30 p.m., May 26, 2005.



York Region An association of families who have lost a child through death.

Bereaved Families of Ontario

Founded in 1978, under the auspices of the Hospital for Sick Children, Bereaved Families is a self-help organization staffed by bereaved persons. Specialists in the area of grief and bereavement from the professional community serve as a resource both in the development of on-going programmes and in the supervision and training of self-help group leaders.

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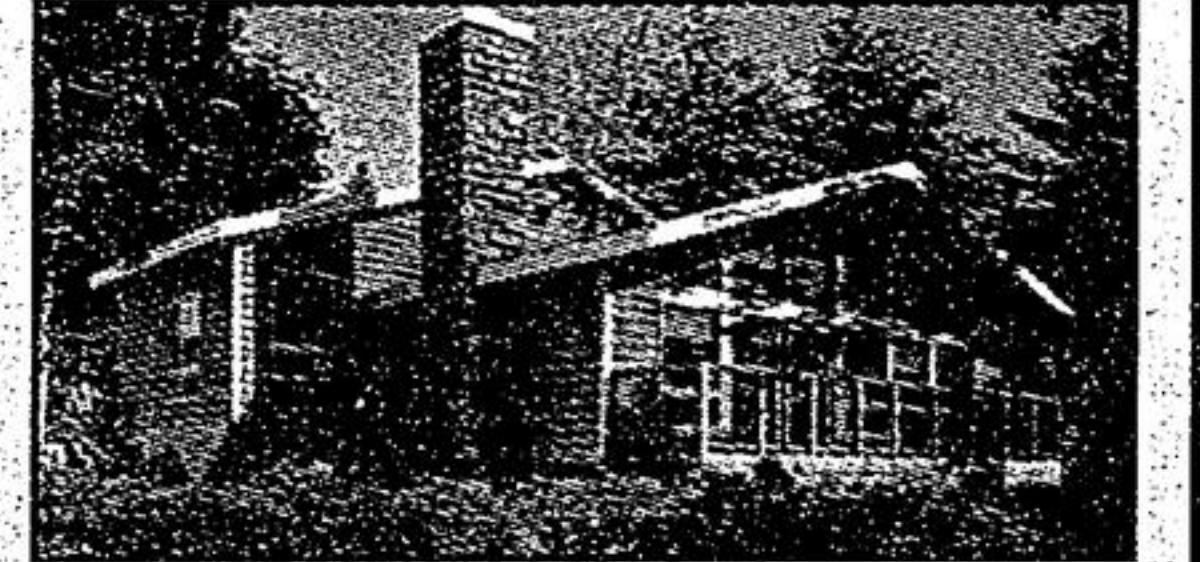
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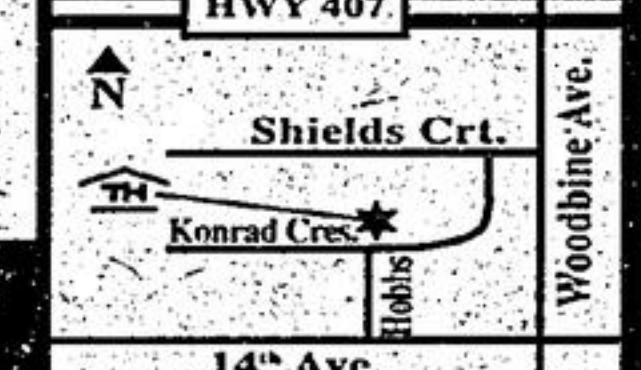
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