

Big Pipe focus of hopes, fears for upcoming year

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Staff Writer

There are a lot of big hopes in York Region for the Big Pipe.

The controversial trunk sewer system is at various stages of development in various areas across the region and, in the coming year, the unrest will certainly continue.

Those for and against the trunk sewage system are united in their hope for a greater understanding of the issue and the long-term implications.

Bala Araiyaundaran is the director of capital delivery for York Region.

His projections for the coming year depend on all sections of the project moving forward.

He hopes construction of the 16th Avenue sewer will proceed as smoothly as it has, while eliminating public and regulatory concerns.

Mr. Araiyaundaran also hopes environmental assessments will be approved in order for York Region to initiate a study.

He hopes the environmental assessment for the Duffin Creek water control plant expansion will be completed in 2006.

Critics of the Big Pipe want policy-makers held accountable for existing conservation laws.

David Donnelly represents a group that has opposed the 16th Avenue construction on the grounds that it is in violation of the Federal Fisheries Act.

His case was thrown out by the federal Attorney General last month.

His hope is that there will be an inquiry into what he calls "shocking and inappropriate behaviour" by the Attorney General in throwing out the case 16

months into the prosecution.

"York Region has been given an open and blank cheque to destroy the environment," Mr. Donnelly said.

Richmond Hill City Councillor Elio Di Iorio agrees that construction of the Big Pipe does not hold up against existing conservation laws.

"I'm hoping the province will recognize that it is undermining the Source-water Protection Act, the Greenbelt Protection Act and the Places to Grow Act," Mr. Di Iorio said.

But, he says plans for the Big Pipe are not a matter of how the sewer system is constructed but rather questions the infrastructure as a whole.

He wants a public discussion on the system in its entirety, instead of considering the merits of each section.

"I'm hopeful that the public will recognize the path this sets us on and that this will be a municipal election issue in 2006," Mr. Di Iorio said.

The Big Pipe is a product of a failure to consider other more sustainable options for facilitating growth, he said.

"I'm hopeful builders who are interested in explaining more progressive

ways of servicing the community will be recognized and encouraged to innovate and find more sustainable ways to grow our community," he said.

York Region chairperson, Bill Fisch sees development of the trunk sewage system as being very progressive and he is pleased that the region has changed

the technology on the 19th Avenue and Leslie Street section.

He sees progress reflected in the fact that they are finding ways to proceed that don't require dewatering.

"We are growing and this is the best and most environmentally sound option," Mr. Fisch said.



DAVID DONNELLY: Environmental lawyer hopes for inquiry into dismissal of case against region.



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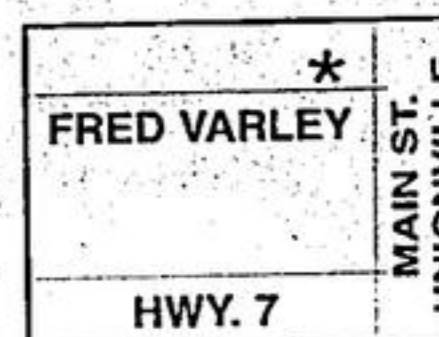
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