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PROVINCE REBUFFS DURHAM

Regional OPA questioned

By Mark Ostler

Durham Region needs to redraft key aspects of its approach to future development because it undermines the provincial growth plan, says the province.

In a detailed letter sent to the region last week, the **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing** spells out what it sees as shortcomings of the regional official plan amendment, ROPA 128, approved last June. The amendment was intended to bring Durham into conformity with the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

“A key concern is that the land budget overestimates the amount of land needed to accommodate the growth forecast for the Region and is based on assumptions inconsistent with the Growth Plan’s policies,” according to the letter signed by **Larry Clay**, regional director of municipal services for the ministry’s central office.

Chief among the province’s concerns is that Durham went beyond the provincial growth plan’s 2031 planning horizon by setting policies and putting aside land through 2051. The letter also notes that Durham neglected to conduct comprehensive analyses of the financial and infrastructural effects of ROPA 128.

Durham Region officials would not comment immediately on the province’s comments, which echoes similar concerns raised by the ministry last year in a lengthy review of the region’s draft amendment just before it was approved by regional council.

In May 2009, a letter from MMAH and the **Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure** stated that “the region has significantly overestimated the need for new designated greenfield area to meet the growth forecast for the region.” (See *NRU-GTA Edition, June 3 and 10, 2010*)

At the time, regional council opted to adopt the contentious amendment and begin discussions with the province on any changes that might be necessary.

This week, **Ajax** mayor **Steve Parish**, an outspoken regional councillor, welcomed the province’s assessment of

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DOWNTOWN OSHAWA

Old building, new use

By Amy Lazar

The empty halls of the historic Alger Press Building will be buzzing again, this time with students.

The **University of Ontario Institute of Technology** (UOIT) in **Oshawa** has signed a 30-year lease with property owners **LPF Realty Inc.** to use the century-old downtown building as home of its faculty of criminology, justice and policy studies.

The renovations and restoration undertaken by the property owner are scheduled to be completed by the fall semester.

“We are very excited about the opportunity for our students to move into a newly-renovated Alger building and that it will partner with the Bond Street facility,” said Dr. **Ronald Bordessa**, president of UOIT. The nearby Bond Street facility, now under construction, is a five-storey 30,000-square-foot building with classroom, lab and office space leased to UOIT.

The Alger Building at Charles and Athol Streets, just east of the General Motors Centre, has been vacant for nearly two decades. Built in 1928 and designed in the modern classicism style by architect **Norman A. Armstrong**, the building originally served as an underwear factory. Later, it was

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Coming Up

MARCH 22

Ajax Community Affairs & Planning Committee, 7:00 p.m.

Oakville Council, 7:00 p.m.

Milton Administration & Planning Committee, 7:30 p.m.

Mississauga Planning & Development Committee, 1:30 p.m.

MARCH 24

Halton Region Planning & Public Works Committee, 9:30 a.m.

MARCH 25

York Region Council, 9:30 a.m.

MARCH 29

Whitby Council, 7:00 p.m.

Ajax Council, 7:00 p.m.

Oakville Planning & Development Council, 7:00 p.m.

Milton Council, 7:30 p.m.

MARCH 31

Durham Region Council, 10:00 a.m.

Halton Region Council, 9:30 a.m.

Mississauga Council, 9:00 a.m.

APRIL 1

Peel Region Council, 9:30 a.m.

APRIL 6

Durham Region Planning Committee, 9:30 a.m.

Whitby Planning & Development Committee, 7:00 p.m.

Ajax Community Affairs & Planning Committee, 7:00 p.m.

Oakville Council, 7:00 p.m.

Mississauga Planning & Development Committee, 1:30 p.m.

Pickering Planning & Development Committee, 7:30 p.m.

APRIL 7

York Region Planning & Economic Development Committee, 1:00 p.m.

APRIL 12

Ajax Council, 7:00 p.m.

OAKVILLE POWER PLANT

Committee says no

Oakville's committee of adjustment has put up a roadblock to the development of a new power plant near residential areas in the town, following months of back-and-forth rhetoric between the town and **Ontario Power Authority** over the \$1.2-billion facility.

Last week, the committee denied permission to **Ford Motor Company of Canada** to convey land at **1400 Royal Windsor Drive to TransCanada Corporation** to build a **900-megawatt plant**. The committee also denied minor variances to permit the facility on the grounds that council has enacted a town-wide interim control by-law prohibiting power plants larger than 10 megawatts.

The town's interim control by-law is intended to remain in place until officials complete planning studies to determine the appropriateness of large power generation facilities for Oakville.

The committee's decision comes after months of vigorous opposition to the power plant from Mayor **Rob Burton** and town council.

Mayor Burton has previously sent letters to Ontario Premier **Dalton McGuinty**, provincial officials and their federal counterparts asking them to reconsider the location of the plant and to impose tougher restrictions on potential hazardous emissions from the new facility.

The town has tried to restrict such emissions on its own, with council approval of The Health Protection

Air Quality By-law earlier this year to restrict emissions of fine particulate matter from facilities within the town.

The town contends the proposed power plant is too close to residential areas, as the site is less than 400 metres from schools and houses.



TransCanada's draft environmental review report, released in late January, concluded that the plant's increased noise levels and the effect on air quality would be negligible. Moreover, according to the utility, the power plant would contribute to "clean generation capacity to the electrical grid, creation of temporary and permanent job opportunities, the economic benefits in terms of jobs, taxes and investment to the Town of Oakville, and improved aesthetics by removal of existing facilities and provision of landscaping features."

The Ontario Power Authority awarded the contract for the facility's construction to TransCanada in September of last year and the plant is expected to open in February 2014.

(See *NRU-GTA Edition* October 7, 21 and 28, November 18 and December 9 and 30, 2009 and February 3 and 10, 2010.) **NRU**

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GTA in Brief

Renewable energy on horizon

A total of 510 green energy projects were approved by the provincial government last week. The contracts were approved for power generation under the *Green Energy Act's* feed-in tariff program, whereby the province offers

stable, long-term prices for power generated by renewable energy.

The projects, located in 120 municipalities, were proposed by a wide variety of proponents: farmers, businesses, public institutions, municipalities and distribution companies. Together the projects will generate 112 megawatts of energy, of which 95 per cent will come from solar power. Other projects include biogas, biomass water, and onshore wind power.

DURHAM

Durham direct election of regional chair

Durham Region council voted 15-8 in favour of including a referendum question on the October municipal election ballot asking residents if they want to directly elect a regional chair. Currently, the regional chair is appoint-

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ROPA 128. He characterized the amendment as “irresponsible,” adding regional council approval of ROPA 128 amounted to “adopting a plan [that] was really sprawl” to the detriment of good urban planning.

“It was all about sprawling Durham and not about developing Durham in conformity with the growth plan [and]...with good urban planning,” Parish told *NRU*. “Basically Durham ignored the growth plan.”

In one key assumption, ROPA 128 plans for 25,000 more jobs than the provincial forecast of 350,000 for the region, though Durham has cut the amount of jobs to be allocated to north **Pickering's** Seaton lands by more than half. The 3,000-hectare Seaton area is being planned as sustainable community with a projected population of 70,000 and 35,000 jobs in 15 communities. The province has hired UK-based design firm **BDP** to develop a master plan for Seaton, expected to be completed next month. (*See NRU-GTA Edition, November 18, 2009*)

“The Ministry is concerned that the scale of the proposed urban expansion areas, resulting urban form and densities...will undermine the Growth Plan’s policy objective of creating compact, complete communities for future generations,” Clay wrote in his letter. “Moreover, it will also undermine the Region’s own efforts to make efficient use of existing land and infrastructure and build and sustain good transit services.”

One specific area of contention is ROPA 128’s designation of new greenfield lands for development in northeast Pickering. Should they be developed, Ajax could suffer unintended consequences as the lands in question are at the headwaters of Carruther’s Creek that runs straight through Ajax. Parish noted that erosion, flooding and other issues related to the watershed are not addressed through the designation and that the region had neglected to study infrastructure costs related to newly-designated lands.

“It’s really irresponsible to do such a mammoth study with so many far-reaching implications without having any idea what the financial implications of those decisions are,” Parish said. “What are the servicing costs, for example, in northeast Pickering to have a new urban area that is not contiguous with the existing urban area?”

Ajax is currently on track to meet the June deadline to conform to the growth plan. The town has completed a draft conformity amendment and is currently seeking public comments. So too are Pickering and Whitby. **Oshawa** has asked the province to extend its deadline to April 2011 given the lengthy approval process for ROPA 128, which directly guides lower tier conformity amendments, and the upcoming municipal election. **Clarington** is also considering asking for an extension. (*See NRU-GTA Edition, February 10, 2010*)

Durham Region officials are expected to prepare a staff report shortly to respond to the province’s concerns.

Last week’s letter from the municipal affairs and housing ministry is the province’s draft response, which includes input from seven different ministries. Durham Region will assess the province’s concerns and issue its own response, at which point the province will issue a final decision. **NRU**

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ed by regional council members. In the 2006 election, the **Cities of Pickering** and **Oshawa** and the **Town of Ajax** put a similar question on the ballot and found a majority approved of directly electing the regional chair. If a majority in the Oct. 25 election support the change, a direct vote for a regional chair would come in 2014 at the earliest. Regional council must now pass a by-law asking local municipalities to include the question on the ballot and the **Ministry of Municipal Affairs**

and **Housing** must approve the question. (See *NRU-GTA Edition February 17 and March 10*).

Ajax transportation OPA

The **Town of Ajax** will host a public meeting to discuss a town-initiated official plan amendment to update its transportation policies. The amendment, dubbed "Ajax Forward, Vibrant Streets", updates the official plan to include policies from the town's Transportation Master Plan, approved in 2007. The meeting is scheduled April 6 at 7:00 p.m. in council chambers.

What's in a name?

Ajax has launched a competition to name three new community facilities — the Greenwood Conservation Area pavilion, the Waterfront East pavilion and the new community centre and park at Taunton and Audley roads.

New Pickering school

The **City of Pickering** will host a public meeting to discuss a draft plan of subdivision and zoning by-law amendment submitted by the **Ontario Realty**

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Oshawa continued from page 1

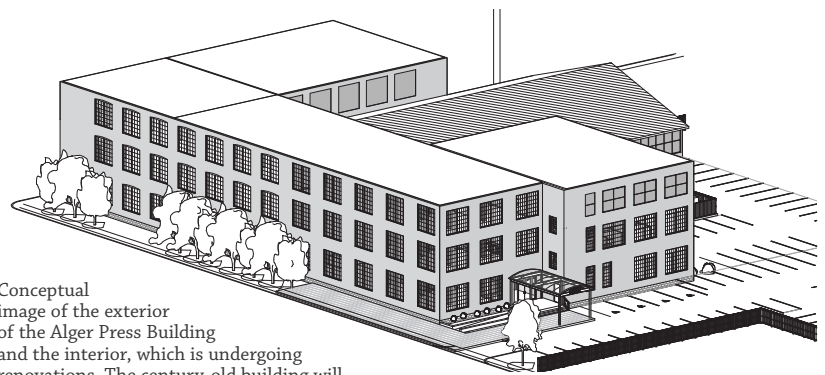
revamped to produce fabrics for cars and print newspapers. Alger Press Ltd. had owned the building since 1946, but it closed for good in 1993 after the company declared bankruptcy.

With much emphasis on downtown revitalization and funds flowing from provincial ministries for shovel-ready projects, the project is the latest example in Oshawa of adapting old buildings for new uses.

Two historic buildings in the downtown, the Regent Theatre and the Genosha Hotel, are also taking on new lives. When council designated the hotel building as a heritage structure in 2005, the Alger Building and the Regent Theatre were also recognized as nearby structures with architectural context. The hotel is being redeveloped into student residences by a private developer.

Two years ago, the city sold the Regent Theatre to **Ellipsis Assets Oshawa Inc.** Last October, *NRU* reported that the property would be changing hands again and that **UOIT** and **London Investments Corp.** are the new owners. Plans are underway to reopen the theatre later this year as a lecture hall for students.

The renovation of the Alger building will add classrooms and lecture halls, office and study spaces, a café and a library. The 87,000-square-foot retrofit includes updates to the mechanical and electrical systems to make the building energy efficient and accessible. The university aims to have the building ready for students in the fall. (See *NRU-GTA Edition October 14, 2009*).



• Conceptual image of the exterior of the Alger Press Building and the interior, which is undergoing renovations. The century-old building will be open to its new use this fall.

Source: UOIT



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NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB

Brampton and the YMCA

The **City of Brampton** and the **YMCA of Greater Toronto** have agreed to look at the merits of building a new facility on city-owned land and how to pay for it.

The proposed complex would be in the northeast quadrant of Brampton on city-owned land at the southeast corner of Torbram Road and Sandalwood Parkway.

“The city and the YMCA agree to co-fund the next stage of market research, the total cost of which is estimated at approximately \$70,000,” according to a memorandum of understanding approved at last week’s council meeting.

Half of the proposed budget will pay for a market study by **LeisurePlan Inc.** of community participation rates and relationships with other potential service providers on the site. City staff suggested evaluating the ability to cluster services there, such as whether there is demand for a public library at the site. The study is expected to be completed in six months.

A second study, also estimated to cost \$35,000, will look at community support for a fundraising campaign. But the study will only be pursued if the market analysis concludes a YMCA is viable.

The YMCA runs a downtown facility that opened in 1998 after the city provided the site at a “nominal cost.” The Y has expressed an interest in building a new full-service facility in Brampton.

The identified area for a possible YMCA is in a 13.7-hectare (34-acre) community park with soccer fields and adjacent to a new secondary school. The city had planned to build an indoor recreation facility but other nearby projects such as the Brampton Soccer Centre became more of a priority.

Once the studies are complete, the city and the YMCA will decide if they want to move ahead with the planning process for construction of the facility.

The city has allocated funds from its capital budget to pay for its portion of the market research. City officials say it is too early in the process for council to allocate funds or land for the facility.

NRU

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Corporation to permit the development of a new school on lands south-east of Taunton and Brock Roads. The meeting is scheduled April 6 at 7:30 p.m. in council chambers.

HALTON

Election education

The **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing** is hosting a seminar for candidates on the upcoming municipal election. The seminar will include information on campaign contribution and expenses rules and other requirements of the *Municipal Elections Act*. The seminar is scheduled April 15 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the **Town of Oakville** council chambers.

Lakeshore proposal

Oakville will host a public information meeting to discuss a zoning by-law amendment and draft plan of condominium submitted by **394 Lakeshore Oakville Holdings Inc.** The proposal

would see the development of 23 detached houses at **394 Lakeshore Road West**, southwest of Dorval Drive. The meeting is scheduled March 31 at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall.

PEEL

Faith in planning

The **City of Brampton** is reviewing its policies on places of worship, with proposed updates to its draft official plan and zoning by-law amendments. A study of the town’s policies in April, 2009 was followed by consultation with the city’s faith communities. The draft new policies would allow places of worship in areas designated under the official plan as residential, commercial, institutional, business corridor and industrial. In areas zoned residential, commercial and industrial—though not in heavy industrial areas—places of worship would be


permitted as-of-right. A public meeting to discuss the amendments is scheduled April 8 at 7:00 p.m. at the Pearson Convention Centre.

Hurontario transit

The City of Brampton will host a public meeting to discuss the Hurontario/Main Street Study conducted jointly by Brampton and **Mississauga**. A master plan for the corridor aims to integrate future rapid transit, land uses and urban design. The meeting, scheduled March 30 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Brampton city hall, will include the presentation of a preferred rapid tran-

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GTA OMB News

Durham DC rehearing

In a decision issued February 25, board member **Wilson Lee** approved a motion by **2135252 Ontario Inc.** and **CSH (Wynfield) RE Inc.** for a rehearing of a July 23, 2009 decision issued by board member **Jyoti Zuidema** regarding appeals against **Durham Region's** development charges by-law.

At issue is whether or not development charges by-laws must be consistent with the *Provincial Policy Statement*.

The original appeal centred on the classification of seniors housing units under the existing development charges by-law. CSH and 2135252 Ontario argued that the region either should create a separate development charge category for seniors housing, as it falls under the special needs category, or classify such developments as institutional.

In requesting the rehearing, CSH said that levying a higher development charge for seniors' housing does not encourage special needs housing, though such facilitation is required pursuant to the *Provincial Policy Statement*.

The board approved the motion, calling for a rehearing.

Since a development charge by-law affects planning matters, it is required to be consistent with the *Provincial Policy Statement*, the board concluded. The rehearing was ordered to determine if the original decision sufficiently addressed such consistency.

Solicitors **Brad Teichman (McCarthy Tétrault)** and **Kevin Ryan** represent Durham Region. Solicitors **Stephen D'Agostino** and **Beth Turner (Thomson, Rogers)** represent 2135252 Ontario Inc. and CSH (Wynfield) RE Inc. (See *OMB Case No. DC080008*.) NRU



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sit mode, such as light rail or bus rapid transit, and options for its alignment along the corridor, as well as a planning and land use strategy. More info can be found at www.hurontario-main.ca.

Eglinton East commercial

The City of Mississauga has received

an application from **1751504 Ontario Inc.** for a zoning by-law amendment to permit the development of a single-storey commercial building at **1094 Eglinton Avenue East**, between Dixie Road and Highway 403.

YORK

Canadian gallery reno

The federal and provincial governments

have kicked in \$4.2-million in total to renovate the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in **Vaughan**. The contribution will help the gallery develop new trails on the property, a new entryway with sculptures lining the driveway and a new student centre. The renovations are set to begin in August and wrap up by March, 2011. NRU

GTA People

Former **Town of Whitby** mayor **Bob Attersley**, the longest-serving in that position, died March 12 following a brief illness. Attersley, 76, served as mayor from 1980 to 1991 and was a local hero with deep roots in the town's hockey com-

munity. In 1958, he scored the winning goal during the Whitby Dunlops' world championship game and went on to play for Canada at the 1960 Olympic Games.

Fay Booker has been named the new chair of the **Niagara Parks Commission** board of directors. A business and financial consultant who owns the firm Booker & Associates, she is a former partner at Grant Thornton LLP and Deloitte & Touche LLP.

Durham Region's commissioner of economic development and tourism, **Patrick Olive** has announced his retirement after 25 years in the position.