

Ward 15 Newsletter – Summer 2006



Margaret McCarthy
Ward 15 Councillor
Flamborough
905-546-2713
mmccarth@hamilton.ca

PROPERTY REASSESSMENTS CANCELLED UNTIL 2008

The Province has taken the welcome step in freezing property tax values for the next two years. This is really good news to those of us who have been fighting the ever increasing values that have been placed on our homes since CVA was introduced annually back in 2001. Simply put, large increases in the value placed on our homes mean large tax hits, something we know all too well in Flamborough. Knowing the system was taxing many of my residents out of their homes, I opened my office to assist constituents with their request for reconsideration and faxed them directly to MPAC for reductions. MPAC is the company responsible for assessing the value of every property in Ontario for property taxation purposes. About 60 percent of my residents were successful in receiving some lowered adjustments through that process, but it was an onerous, ambiguous task and fraught with many holes in the system. Armed with the knowledge of experiencing both successes and failures in the evaluation process of MPAC I began petitioning the Province for reform. Help came through the unanimous support from my colleagues along with several other municipalities that bore enough pressure on the McGuinty Government and Ombudsman Andre Marin to revamp the system. Flamborough's below average CVAs for this year's budget helped tremendously in bringing in the lowest tax increase in recent memory. Area Rating is another key component in keeping tax figures in line. It is based on the philosophy that you don't pay for services you don't receive and keeping Area Rating for my Flamborough residents equates to \$700.00 OFF of our tax bill on an annual basis. It's reasonable and fair to our municipality which should not be expected to foot the bill for services we don't receive, although it is a challenge at every budget meeting to keep it in place.

The other aid that has helped on an annual basis is of course the Flamborough Slots money which has reduced Flamborough's taxes this year by \$3 million. Keeping Area Rating and the slot money in Flamborough is something that I have been successful with at the City of Hamilton Council level since amalgamation. Now with the Province re-evaluating the whole CVA system over the next two years in order to make the essential improvements, we are headed in a better direction.

UP UP AND AWAY

Memorial Park is off and running with its revamping and new skate board feature which has drawn participants from far and wide. Knowing our kids were constantly being shoved from the plazas which were acting as the unofficial place for skateboarders sent me searching for funds and design features that would give our kids the place that they so desperately sought. Judging by the numbers that I have seen at the park enjoying the new attractions it has been time and money well spent, so much so in fact that no one seems to want to leave. We now have to instill the fact that by 11:00 o'clock at night the lights go out and the park is officially closed, time for bed, go home, tomorrow is another day. All the same I love to see it so enjoyed!

WHAT IS THAT DEAFENING SILENCE ?

Oh yes..... It's the sound of a good night's sleep. The much anticipated anti-whistling By-law has now been passed for the Canadian Pacific Railway crossing at Parkside Drive. Unanimous support came from my colleagues on July 12th which supported my work for the past six years in trying to meet the new requirements of CPR. We met the new conditions for approval thanks to the hard work of both Ed Switenky from the City's Engineering department and Bill Weaver, our Flamborough supervisor of Public Works. Together we completed the safety audit, issued work permits for upgrades and signed the insurance premiums. Now all that is left is the paperwork to be signed by CPR that will then issue "Special Instructions" eliminating the use of train whistles at that crossing. Expect your sleeping to improve by late August if not sooner. Here's hoping its sooner!

Sincerely, *Margaret McCarthy*