

There are few advantages to BRES?Option 6

The open house hosted by the Region of Peel Sept. 14 left this attendee with a number of unanswered questions.

Regional council voted at their July 21 meeting to choose Option 6 as the preferred option for the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES). Caledon's Mayor Allan Thompson and the Town's Regional representatives, with the exception of Councillor Annette Groves who voted with the majority, preferred Option 3. This area was chosen by Caledon council in June 2014 after having been vetted through an extensive series of Town-initiated studies begun in 2012. According to the Town's March 8, 2016 BRES update, these studies were undertaken to meet the requirements of a provincially mandated Municipal Comprehensive Review and were part of a combined total Town approved BRES budget of \$1.93 million.

As reported in the local press, Regional councillors voting for Option 6 chose to ignore many of the Town's study conclusions and instead weighted their decision almost entirely on the cheapest option for the Region to provide sanitary and water services. While appearing responsible in looking after Regional taxpayers dollars however, a number of significant issues have been overlooked. It's been reported that the Option 3 developer offered to upfront the cost of Regional services, thus negating councillors' concerns about the extra cost of servicing this option, versus Option 6. Developers have to pay development charges (DCs) to the Town and Region for every unit that gets built on their lands. DCs help pay for the cost of Regional services brought to developments, but there's always a shortfall between what's paid in the form of DCs and the real cost of servicing. The differences between the DCs that would be collected from Option 3 and Option 6 and the capital costs of servicing their sites was approximately \$67 million in favour of Option 6, with an additional \$68 million in 100-year lifecycle costs also in favour of Option 6.

The additional lifecycle costs attributed in the Fiscal Impact Summary to Option 3 leaves out the fact that all of the White Belt properties in Options 4 and 5, which are located in between Option 6 and Option 3, will be developed well before the stated 100-year cycle expires. So why pin all the lifecycle costs on Option 3 and not have them shared with Options 4 and 5? Option 3 proponents need to make clear to Regional councillors which costs they're willing to pay in addition to the DCs for their development if their offer is to be taken seriously.

One of the many criteria Town council believed important in voting for Option 3 as their preferred choice was the proposed Bolton GO station, slated to be located on Humber Station Road adjacent to Option 3. The majority on Regional council believed the GO station's construction is not on the Province's radar in the foreseeable future. If the Town believes otherwise, then it should produce solid evidence to the contrary at the upcoming public meeting Sept. 29.

The press also reported that Groves, the lone Caledon councilor to vote in favor of Option 6, contended that future residents living in this area would help support struggling mom and pop (businesses).? Given Option 6's proximity to Brampton shopping and my understanding that Option 6 is to have it's own commercial infrastructure, it offers no guarantee that consumers would do the majority of their shopping in Bolton, whereas Option 3 residents living north of King Street would likely choose shopping closer to home, i.e. in Bolton, thus supporting the very merchants she hopes to help.

It was further reported that Groves said the public's reaction to the Canadian Tire distribution centre ?has shown her the community is done with warehousing and more employment lands.? The Town has proposed that Option 6, the southern end of which is located next to a proposed provincial highway corridor, be considered as future employment lands. Bolton's current employment lands may contain a lot of warehousing, but that's a result of their proximity to the CP intermodal yard and the Highway 50/427 transportation corridor. These clean businesses may not employ thousands, but are nonetheless responsible for helping lower the residential tax rate Town wide. Why would the Town choose to interfere with what the market dictates is most desirable in areas zoned for these kinds of uses? If it's going to help lower our high residential tax rates, then bring on more warehouses. Coleraine Drive, located nearby and built to four lanes to accommodate traffic diverted from Highway 50 and Bolton's industrial zone, will be upgraded south of Mayfield Road as part of the Highway 427 extension to Major Mackenzie Drive in the next five years. Studies currently on hold by the province to build an east-west 400 series highway parallel to Mayfield Road, will also help attract future employers dependent on a good transportation network once completed.

As Bolton grows westward it only makes sense that long term planning entail a contiguous corridor of lands that take into account the Town's future employment needs. Option 6 as residential could ultimately leave that community looking like a residential island in the middle of employment lands to the east and future employment lands to the west.

The final choice for Bolton's expansion area will undoubtedly be decided at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), not Regional council. Whichever developer ends up the loser at Regional council will be sure to file an appeal. Final word from the OMB will likely not be until the latter part of 2017 or some time in 2018.

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