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# Investing in Innisfil Heights

Innisfil council is starting to fight for its vital Highway 400 corridor development, something that hasn't yet been a priority of higher government.

Town council will likely pass a recommendation to ask the County of Simcoe to formally recognize the Innisfil Heights development in its Official Plan soon. The proposed development would have a significant impact on the local economy, bringing 22,000 jobs and 27,000 residents to the town by 2026.

However, the town has hit several stumbling blocks along the road to development. First, the town has been waiting for the county to complete its growth management policy since 2006. Before construction can begin, the town's Official Plan must conform with the county's.

The town has also been asked to wait for the completion of several county and provincial growth studies. Those growth studies have been finished, while the county's plan is expected to be passed by June.

But it seems like there's been plenty of complacency from all levels of government over the last few years.

For all the millions of dollars spent on studies like the Intergovernmental Action Plan, Places to Grow the Assimilative Capacity Study for Lake Simcoe, and the town's own growth plans, the



## Comment

by Chris Simon

three levels of government have failed to link this significant project into its plans. The Innisfil Heights development is one of the largest proposed projects in the county. Bradford West Gwillimbury, Barrie and other surrounding municipalities will depend on this development for jobs and economic growth.

It's a natural place to build. And in a region where growth is inevitable, the province and county have thus far failed to recognize a fantastic opportunity. Innisfil is a municipality that actually wants growth to occur, and has plenty of available space along a major commuter route to develop.

But so far, Innisfil Heights has failed to show up on the radar of provincial and county politics. Plenty of blame should be passed around.

Clearly, town officials have not stressed the importance of Innisfil Heights to the higher levels of government. But the province and county also failed to recognize the significance this development would have on the local

economy, with relatively little impact on the town's environment and existing population.

How was this development missed by every level of government except the town?

Unfortunately, this delay is already having an impact on Innisfil. During 2008 budget deliberations, town council rejected plans to hire an economic development officer. That officer, would have been responsible for recruiting businesses to the town, thus helping to spur economic growth within the municipality.

It would have been a much needed initiative, which could sell large industrial and retail companies on the benefits of setting up their business in the town.

Right now, the town is unable to approve significant developments while the county completes its growth policy. While there are indications the county will work with the town towards a solution on Innisfil Heights, there's still no guarantee the province will approve an agreement between the municipalities.

The province has already indicated it wants growth to occur closer to the lake.

And without construction, the town cannot expand its tax base and collect growth-related development charges. A wait for the uncertain is costing the town money, and increasing the financial burden on residents.

# Council misjudged building costs

## Letters From Our Readers

After reading the Jan. 16 Scope, I find I have to ask you this question. Is it true? Is it true that 40 per cent of the town's budget increase is going to pay for the cost of the new Taj Ma-town hall and rec centre? If it is, present re-elected members of council, and past members have made the most colossal blunder in the history of this town, and put the taxpayers, and the entire town in jeopardy.

Did they park their brains in a cloud somewhere? Even a child has more fiscal responsibility with their allowance than the council has shown over the last five years, or whenever they dreamed up this scheme to build the Innisfil Tower of

Babel. Did they decide to do it so that their names could be forever etched on a plack? Just between me and you, I wouldn't want to take any credit for this fiasco.

Obviously, the council has no concept of saving for the future, staying out of debt and living within their means. They have been very cavalier with taxpayers' hard-earned money.

What the council has done is put a millstone around the neck of every resident in this town, the biggest milestones being those on our children. This financial burden is untenable. It will affect our future indefinitely. There is no getting out from under this one.

Needs and wants: Do they know the difference? Apparently not! Yes, the town needed more office space. No, the town didn't

need an incredibly ugly white elephant. Yes, Alcona needed some kind of rec centre. No, the town didn't need to put it in the middle of nowhere, inaccessible to the residents who need it most and have no public transportation to get there (I suppose that's next, so they can bump up our taxes another double digits next year). Do they really believe there will be enough people using the rec centre to make it even close to being financially feasible? Not in my lifetime, nor my children's.

How many roads are now not going to be surfaced or repaired?

What infrastructure is going to go by the wayside or be indefinitely deferred because of this lack of good fiscal management?

Last month, we had garbage pickup twice, that's

And we're paying almost \$5,500 annually in taxes for that kind of service? And now it's going up another \$690, what is that? And what travesty will be faced in 2009 or 2010?

We've heard so much rhetoric about the council wanting to develop Innisfil so that it stands out as a unique town. Are they proud of themselves? Is this their idea of building a great town? It will be unique, all right! In a few years, parts of Innisfil will be a ghetto. In trying to solve a problem, they've created a monstrous one. And on top of everything else, there will probably be a mass exodus because families won't be able to afford to live here.

I know one thing for a fact. Those individuals who supported this venture without looking at costs haven't got a clue, and have

no business running this town. Who in their right mind would neglect to consider the ramifications of borrowing such an inconceivable amount of money to do this (interest rates)? Who in their right mind would forget to consider every possible aspect of the endeavour (sewers from Alcona)? Who in their right mind would overlook the inevitability of unexpected costs (delays)?

They should be hanging their heads in shame asking for a salary increase. They haven't earned the one they've got. Perhaps, in good faith, and as an apology to the residents of this town, the council members should take a 12.7 per cent decrease in salary. Better yet, maybe letters of resignation are in order.

Terry and Martha Lindsey, Innisfil

# Van Loan getting national attention

## Letters From Our Readers

I am very proud to see that our MP Peter Van Loan has received such good coverage in a recent Maclean's magazine article.

He has been included in a cover story titled Harper's top 12.

I do not have to tell you how strongly I support Van Loan. But I do wish to tell you when strong support goes national. All across Canada people are reading about our MP.

The article lists the prime minister's top 12 advisers and confidants. It is very important to me that Van Loan made the list.

It is also important to

note that only four of the 12 are elected MPs and three of the four are from Ontario.

This shows clearly that the Harper government is getting excellent advice and strong opinions that represent our riding and our province.

To me, this means good government for all of Canada.

We in York-Simcoe have

a very hard working and intelligent Member of Parliament. We should be very proud that Maclean's has decided that his hard work is being recognized and listened to at the highest level of the Canadian government.

All of the Top 12 have received a nickname, and Van Loan has been called The Mouthpiece for his

ability to deal with any issue strongly, clearly and quickly. His strong verbal skills have made him an important member of the Harper team, in and out of the House of Commons.

Others who made the list include Laureen Harper, Doug Finley, Jim Flaherty, John Baird and Jim Prentice.

John Trotter, Innisfil