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It's hard to blame Innisfil for walking away

If the details of the proposed Barrie/Innisfil land deal is true, you can't blame town representatives for walking away from the bargaining table.

After about 18 months of negotiations, Innisfil representatives turned down a deal offered by provincial facilitator Allan Wells several weeks ago. The bargaining was done behind closed doors, leaving the media and public left to speculate over many of the details and sticking points. But now, with negotiations officially closed, details of a final proposed settlement are being leaked.

Both sides each had a main objective through the bargaining process. Barrie wanted development lands so it's population could continue to expand and prosper into the urban centre of the Simcoe County area. Innisfil, in return, wanted Barrie to help service lands along the Innisfil Heights Highway 400 business corridor. When they entered into formal negotiations, Innisfil representatives believed they would be negotiating on a one hectare development land/one hectare of servicing area



Comment

by Chris Simon

swap.

However, the final deal is believed to have missed two important factors which forced Innisfil to ultimately walk away. Had Innisfil representatives accepted the proposal, they would have given Barrie three times the amount of land being received in return. And while Barrie's new boundaries would have been clearly outlined in the proposal, the location of Innisfil Heights was left out. It's a clear indication that the province is still failing to recognize Innisfil Heights as a development area, something that is continually costing the town time and money.

Both sides saw their requirements heading into the negotiations as critical, and a failure to achieve their goals would cost millions of dollars in tax revenue.

Innisfil's very livelihood as a prosperous municipality is at stake.

Quite simply, failure to develop the 400 corridor would cost Innisfil thousands of new homes. The region would also be left void of 22,000 potential jobs.

While both municipalities and the provincial government are ultimately responsible for the betterment of the area's entire population, it's a wonder why the province would seemingly want to drain Innisfil's future economic base, while taking away significant development lands along the Barrie border.

Perhaps the province doesn't even want Innisfil in it's long-term growth plans for the area. But as long as the province continues to recognize Innisfil as a municipality, it has an obligation to negotiate a fair deal that will help both municipalities become economically stable.

Innisfil representatives saw where this negotiation was headed, and chose to wait for Simcoe County councillors to catch up. Hopefully, they make a decision that allows everyone to prosper.

Walking away shows disrespect

Letters From Our Readers

The mayor's decision to walk away from the Innisfil/Barrie negotiations shows the utmost arrogance and disrespect towards us, the ratepayers of Innisfil.

It's like the Leafs hanging on to Mats Sundin for another three or four years and in the end getting nothing for him. Whether

we like it or not, the fact is Barrie will, in 2011, be in a legal position to expand it's borders into north Innisfil (the moratorium lands) with the blessing of the province. It is inevitable that Innisfil will lose these lands to Barrie.

So, here we go again with another "Made in Innisfil" solution, kind of like the rec centre and new town offices that have wreaked havoc on our taxes. Mayor (Brian Jackson) is

suggesting to bring a pipe from Alcona out to Highway 400 through private partnership. What he really means is to let a developer pick up some of the costs and we, the ratepayers, will once again be on the hook for the remainder of the costs. How many years of 10 per cent tax increases are the people of Innisfil willing to accept?

When Barrie expands into Innisfil legally in 2011 or 2012, I hope we're not

asking ourselves why we didn't make the Sundin deal in 2008 that could have saved the town (and in turn, the ratepayers) millions and millions of dollars and provided the much needed services to create local jobs in the Hwy. 400 area?

Our future as residents and ratepayers of Innisfil has been decided by Jackson over the last 18 months or so, in secret meetings held behind closed doors without any public input. This is

neither democratic nor transparent.

There should be nothing more important on Council's agenda than the intelligent planning of Innisfil's future over the next 25 years, and this decision should not be left up to one person. The residents of Innisfil should demand that our future be put to a plebiscite where every resident is afforded a say in our future.

Brian Wells,
Innisfil

More land talk details should be released

Letters From Our Readers

Once again the talks between Innisfil and Barrie have broken down.

This time Innisfil walked away from the table saying the settlement was not in the best interest of the residents, but as a taxpaying resident who faces a 9.5 per cent tax hike, perhaps now is the time to justify mayor (Brian Jackson's reasons and

comments with a publication of the proposed plan put forth by the provincial facilitator.

Innisfil residents have been forced to remain in the dark regarding all talks and proposals about the Innisfil Heights development project and now another budget is coming down with an increase.

Innisfil needs a business tax base in order to grow, or else risk losing residents that can't afford to live here anymore as well as seasonal

residents that may come to the same decision.

Now excuses are flying around that county growth plans need to be finished up but the county wants Innisfil's growth plan, not to mention the others the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia need to prepare so the county can include those numbers, rather than dictate them as it should be.

Politically, it is becoming a joke and residents deserve more information to help guide our politicians in what

direction they should focus and what residents are willing to give up to remain in this area.

Is Innisfil being too selfish or is Barrie trying to make as big of a land grab as possible?

Hunkering down in our respective municipalities, while no one else can basically help the situation other than act as observers, paying higher taxes each year is not an acceptable solution to this problem.

Release information to

the public so that as political leaders, you can at least try and justify your actions. Otherwise, residents are going to take matters into their own hands as much as they can. They may even have to wave goodbye to you as they leave you behind.

Everyday is a wasted day of development and growth for the region.

Prove it as to why it is so difficult.

Robert Tulli,
Innisfil

Segregated schools make no sense

Letters From Our Readers

When we hear about the latest movement in education it just makes you want to know why they want

to change back to a segregated school.

To have a faith based schools that are for black students only in Toronto or anywhere does not make sense. I thought that we are all about integrating our systems and having

everyone on the same plain regarding opportunities to learn and grow.

What about the money and the time that busing these children all over comes to?

Teachers too must be invigorated to teach and

inspire the youth of today to achieve at any school that they teach.

Why must we always go back to what a minority wants in this country and not what the majority needs and what is right?

What we should be doing

is teaching more Canadian history to our students so that they know more about Canada. This is something that is needed, not faith-based schooling. Quebec is way ahead in this regards.

Walt Helling,
Innisfil