

Chudleigh column – April 2006

Implementing achievable solutions

Politics has been described as the art of the possible.

I believe there are very achievable solutions to at least two significant issues facing Halton right now. Consequently I am preparing to introduce these solutions to my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature.

Halton residents are facing a development crunch. Large numbers of new residents have moved into Burlington, Oakville and Milton putting a huge strain on existing infrastructure and government services.

The problem is that government funding for many services and programs is determined by population. Population is determined by census counts taken every 10 years, with a mini-census done at the five year mark. Essentially Halton is being funded as if this was 2001 and we all know the huge numbers of new residents that have come to Halton in the last five years.

The solution? Any provincial government funding for services that is predicated on population should use current property tax information to determine the actual population rather than rely on census data. Property tax information is constantly updated. Census data is only a snapshot in time that is dated even before it is completed.

Making this change would provide Halton with government funding for hospitals, infrastructure, and crime prevention which has been chronically underfunded due to our ballooning population. The change would help determine municipal grants for a host of programs such as the gasoline tax rebate that are provided to local municipalities.

This issue of low population counts is an issue across much of the 905 belt where populations are growing rapidly. It is less of an issue in those areas of Ontario where populations are static or growth more gradual.

The other issue where I can see a solution is the problem of the provincial government insisting upon maintaining the right to seize Halton's landfill and force Toronto's garbage on us should Michigan refuse it.

I am working on legislation to protect all municipal landfills in Ontario from having to accept waste from outside their municipalities. It is a protection for property tax payers who have funded expensive land fill planning and operations. There are enough private landfill sites in Ontario in the event of an emergency that municipalities should not be compelled to accept trash they are not responsible for generating.

As most everyone knows, Toronto has been unable to make the hard political decision to handle their trash themselves. They have been trucking it to a Michigan landfill for many months at a very high price.

Halton fought a bitter battle on its own landfill. It has managed the landfill well, extending its life by many years. However, Toronto garbage would fill up the remaining capacity in only a few short years, all courtesy of the Halton property tax payer.

I believe these solutions address very valid concerns in two contentious areas. I will continue to advocate for these solutions because I believe they are possible to achieve and ultimately satisfactory for all parties involved.