

Regional council imbalance will correct itself: Roger Anderson

Fri Mar 28, 2008

By Reka Szekely

AJAX -- Addressing the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade on Tuesday, Regional Chairman Roger Anderson said Ajax's under-representation on Durham council is a temporary situation.

Ajax Mayor Steve Parish has been raising the issue lately, pointing out that with three councillors at the Region, an Ajax councillor represents roughly 30,000 residents while Oshawa's eight councillors represent 17,500 each.

Mr. Anderson said there's no easy way to increase Ajax's presence on council, as it would mean either reducing the numbers for another municipality or increasing the size of council. Both are unpopular options.

He added that with much of Durham's future growth slated for Pickering and Oshawa, the problem would correct itself.

"It's just one of those things, over the course of time, it will balance out," said Mr. Anderson.

He added that the only municipality that is over represented right now is Oshawa, by about two councillors.

"The fact is the city of Oshawa is going to be double or triple the size of Ajax over the next 30 years."

Mr. Anderson made the comments after a question from the audience.

He spent the majority of his speech, his twelfth to the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, talking about trash and transportation issues. He also touched on the Province's growth plan and his expectations for the provincial budget, which was delivered later that day.

As he's done in previous speeches, Mr. Anderson said the Region had a choice between landfill and energy-from-waste and the landfill option had been rejected years ago, particularly by Pickering residents.

"I think as residents of Durham Region, we have an obligation to take care of our own waste and if we can do it within our own borders, we should," he said.

He also pointed out that many council members, including himself, have family members living near the Courtice site chosen for the incinerator and that none of them would support the project if it meant endangering anyone's health.

"My family is the 600,000 residents of Durham Region, so why would I hurt any one of you?"

In terms of the provincial budget, Mr. Anderson talked about the need for \$82 million in funding for a Bus Rapid Transit system along Hwy. 2. The money was announced in the budget later in the day.

"We're going to have buses running along Hwy. 2 every seven and a half minutes, buses that change red lights to green lights so they don't get stuck in traffic," he said pointing out that an Oshawa resident could easily get on the bus to go shopping at the Pickering Town Centre.
