

Blame poor planning

By Bev Elliott

Instead of blaming the island occupiers for the costly delay of the northwest sewer construction for an industrial park that may not be needed, let's be honest about the real cause of the project's problems: poor planning and execution by City Hall.

1. The city's "experts" arrogantly ignored the Six Nations' interest in the Grand River islands.

Although the mayor and chief engineer denied knowing anything about Six Nations claims (Expositor, Dec. 9, 1993), they had been warned on numerous occasions. There were personal discussions with the mayor and city staff, council meetings (Sept. 22; Oct. 5, 1992), Expositor news items (Oct. 2, 1992): (on) "the possibility that an island that the sewer is to cross, is Native land, city engineer Alf Gretzinger said he was not knowledgeable enough about Native affairs to comment on the island." Particularly, in March, 1993, the city was informed by Brent Claridge, lawyer in the farmland expropriation inquiry for the sewer corridor. He grilled the city solicitor and city planners on their understanding of who owns the island, adding "I'd have thought you'd want to know whether you owned the land you want to go over!"

Even after the city received a letter expressing the band council's opposition to the sewer, the city continued to prepare blindly for the island crossing, putting in the aquadam and entrenched equipment, both severely affecting the island which they had

been officially warned did not belong to them.

The city's process in ignoring Six Nations' community interest in the island is a replica of the city's process with the BSAR and the Glebe lands. We haven't learned much in 25 years.

2. Don Kirk, of the Ministry of Natural Resources, confirms the island protesters' charges that the city's environmental study of the northwest area is inaccurate. It is clear that the city's highly paid "experts" obtained an exemption to a proper Environmental Assessment of the northwest development, by answering 16 questions inaccurately or inadequately; for example, the question "Will the undertaking have an effect on any unique, rare or endangered species, habitat or physical features of the environment?"

Responding to the question "Will the proposed undertaking adversely affect human health?", the city's "experts" did not mention that the sewer line would cross the river just upstream from Brantford's drinking water intake.

Another question was "Will the proposed undertaking be highly controversial?" The "experts" could answer "not expected to be controversial at all," because neither the Six Nations people nor the general public were being adequately notified or consulted.

3. The city's "experts" did not tell the public the whole truth when evaluating the three possible sewer routes to serve the northwest industrial area.

One of the city consultant's (Gore and Storrie, January, 1991) outline of advantages and disadvantages was totally silent about the BSAR which was planned to occupy the same corridor. About the same time (March, 1991), other city consultants, McCormick Rankin, did a transportation study on the northwest, discussing the west BSAR at least 16 times. After a public meeting on the sewer route, a citizen wrote a complaint that the tie with the BSAR had not been mentioned.

4. If public information were being done in an honest, forthright manner, the transportation corridor planned since 1982 would certainly have been listed as an "advantage" for the Jennings route.

The consultants recommended the Jennings route for the sewer line because they said it would be cheaper. One wonders

if the cost figures were unfairly manipulated to weigh the apparent cost in favor of the Jennings route. The costs given in 1990 showed the preferred Jennings route as \$6.3 million less than the Powerline route. But when the Environmental Study report was produced in 1991, the cost difference was down to \$2.7 million. (The experts had neglected to mention such things as the cost of the pumping station on the Jennings route.) The higher cost of the Holmedale route included upgrading an old system which would eventually need to be done anyway.

Higher costs for the alternative routes overlooked the very significant fact that, in the long run, they would service hundreds more homes and businesses and, therefore, their cost would be more widely shared.

The "experts" omitted the Jennings route costs of negotiating with the Six Nations for the use of the Island, or for the extensive geotechnical studies which sound reason should demand for an area known to be Salina formation (includes gypsum).

We need leadership at City Hall that will provide new, honest and responsible planning, including dialogue with the public, rather than management by crisis.

Readers may ask themselves: "Who is more concerned about the present and future generations — highly paid city bureaucrats and consultants, or average unpaid people occupying an island for seven weeks during the most severe winter since 1920?"

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