

Avoid lumps of coal and bad debt over the holidays.

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NEWS NORFOLK & REGION

No seasonal trailers allowed



By Daniel R. Pearce, Simcoe Reformer
Wednesday, December 7, 2016 6:34:57 EST PM



The ongoing controversy over Hastings Drive on Long Point took another twist Tuesday night when elected officials pulled their support for seasonal trailers on the narrow stretch of hazard land.

The decision to withdraw a bylaw allowing trailers was made behind closed doors where council heard from Norfolk County lawyer, Peter Tice, said Mayor Charlie Luke.

The reversal, Luke said in an interview Wednesday afternoon, “was based on information the solicitor gave them. He gave them the feeling we can't win this case.”

The bylaw, which had been passed in the summer, was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board, which can overturn a decision by council. The appeal was launched by the provincial government as well as cottage owners on Hastings, and a pre-hearing was slated for Monday morning at town hall.

That meeting has now been cancelled and the bylaw withdrawn, said Luke, who is opposed to allowing trailers.

The latest decision couldn't be announced during Tuesday's public session of council because proper protocol is for Tice to inform the OMB first, he said.

On paper, trailers are no longer allowed on Hastings Drive. But it's unlikely the issue has died.

Property owners along the road have been bringing trailers to their lakeside lots for decades and will probably do so again next spring, said Randy Mawhiney of St. Williams.

Mawhiney said his group of a dozen property owners feel they have the legal right to put trailers there and that the bylaw was meant to clear up the “grey area” over the issue.

“Trailers are actually vehicles, and they don't regulate vehicles,” he said.

A municipal bylaw from an earlier period allows trailers on Hastings, said Mawhiney, and any charges against them won't stand up in court.

Trailers have been on Hastings since the early 1950s “and we can prove it,” he added.

The county had to withdraw from the OMB hearing because it was unable to find a planner to testify as an expert supporting its case, said Mawhiney.

Trailer owners, he said, would have faced four planners from the other side supporting the arguments against them.

“If they (town hall) had tried a little harder to find a planner, we would have stuck with them,” Mawhiney said. “We felt they let us down.”

Hastings Drive has been at the centre of controversy for years. The road juts out at the west end of the point into the open part of the lake and is exposed to sudden storms.

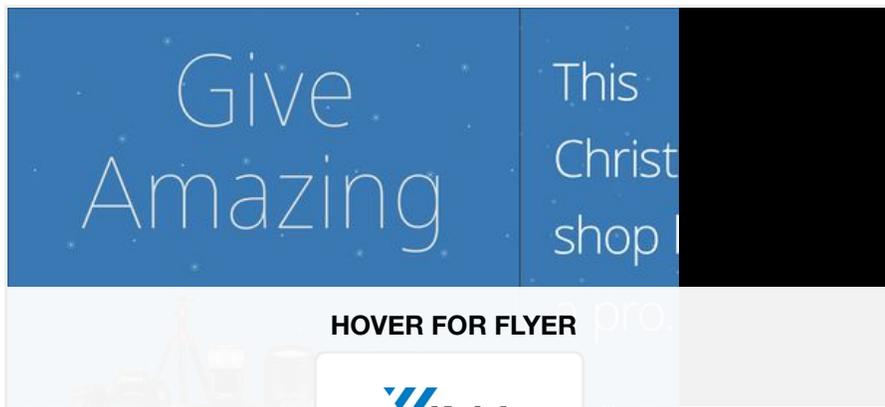
A severe storm in December 1985 destroyed and damaged a number of cottages there. Property owners have wanted to either rebuild or at least be allowed to put trailers on their lots.

They have faced opposition from a number of sides including environmentalists concerned about disturbing habitat on Long Point.

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