

Building of new homes to pause locally due to Bill 23]

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Shelburne council is delaying the tendering and construction of a new Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) as they navigate financial constraints related to Bill 23.

During their meeting on Monday (Jan. 23), council received a report from chief administrative officer (CAO) Denyse Morrissey and town planner Steve Wever on the potential impacts of Bill 23.

"It's critical for us to make the province aware of the impact of the development charges as it relates specifically to our waste treatment plant and therefore the capacity to expand," said Morrissey.

Bill 23, also known as the More Homes Built Faster Act, is a piece of legislation introduced by the Ford government in November that makes changes such as reducing municipal development charges to increase the speed of housing development.

The reduction in development charges collected by municipalities under Bill 23 is a significant constraint for the Town of Shelburne, as they plan for a new Wastewater Pollution Control Plant.

In 2020, Shelburne council received a report from the municipality's contracted engineer S. Burnett & Associates Limited, on the construction of a multi-million dollar upgrade to the wastewater plant. Council approved \$2 million in funding in May of 2021 for the design of the expansion.

A new Wastewater Pollution Control Plant is a pressing issue since the town has reached the capacity of its existing plant.

The upgrades to the wastewater plant are estimated to cost between \$33 and \$34 million, with a significant amount of the cost initially planned to be supported through development charges.

"We do not have the financial capacity and nor will we have the financial capacity to ever borrow \$30 million," said Morrissey.

Like many municipalities, the Town of Shelburne has operated under the principle that 'growth pays for growth', and a primary tool for implementing the principle is through development charges.

Wever noted that with reduced development charges, the question becomes 'where will the funding to build the waste treatment plant and other infrastructure that supports housing development come from?'

"It basically falls back on taxpayers, and the potential to either cut services or hold services off," said Coun. Lindsay Wegener.

Wever also noted the impacts of delaying the construction of the Wastewater Pollution Control Plant.

"What's at risk here is that without the infrastructure, we could be reaching a stalemate on housing for several years," said Wever. "After the Fieldgate subdivision is completed there's really not any big residential project that can move forward until the service and capacity has a definitive timeline and is funded."

According to the report to council, nearly 2,000 planned and proposed residential units are dependent on the construction of the new Wastewater Pollution Control Plant.

These developments include:

? Emerald Crossing/Shelburne 89 Developments Ltd ? 60 units

? 416, 428, 428 Main St. W (Shelburne West) ? 179 units

? 501-505 Main St. West (Shelburne West) ? 74 + 50 future phase units

? 124 Owen Sound Street ? 44 units