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## **Seaton 'crazy train' needs to stop**

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Pickering and Durham councils are justifiably angry that they, namely their taxpayers, might end up paying Seaton infrastructure costs.

That wasn't in the cards for the Central Pickering Development Plan (CPDP) until January. It was then that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing initiated an amendment to the plan, created by the Province in 2006 and governing planning for the community's development.

According to a City estimate, the price tag would be in the order of \$75 million, a huge expense for the City and one that originally wasn't Pickering's to pick up.

Pickering council last week approved a report that asked the minister to reinstate the plan clause providing financial protection to the City.

"The Province has been running this crazy train called Seaton and it has the potential to bankrupt not only the Region of Durham but also the City of Pickering," said Councillor Bill McLean.

"I fully support this, I think it's a good, clear message we're sending the Province that we are very, very concerned with Seaton."

Pickering should be. The City and Region for some time have expressed grave concerns over the development.

When the Region received the proposed amendment to the development plan, not one but many red flags went up. The Province described the amendment as "minor housekeeping" changes attempting to clarify issues such as population and employment forecasts and the relationship between the CPDP and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

But Region staff said the amendment was far from housekeeping, arguing the changes if implemented could have huge impacts on Durham's autonomy and financial well-being. Especially at issue is the possibility that more than \$1 billion in infrastructure costs could be dumped on Durham taxpayers.

"We went from a plan from the Province that was cost-neutral to one that now isn't cost-neutral," Regional Chairman Roger Anderson said at the meeting.

"The bottom line is cost," said Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan. "This amendment makes it possible for costs to be uploaded to the Region and the City of Pickering... and unless we have the jobs it's the taxpayer that picks up the cost."

Oshawa Councillor Amy England went as far as saying "we are at war with the Province."

Provincial representatives should sit down with Pickering and Regional officials and get this mess sorted out. This back and forth has to end with a clear, realistic plan that doesn't burn Pickering taxpayers.

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