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| Apr 16, 2010 - 10:43 AM |

Hospital details shrouded in secrecy

The AFP (Alternative Financing and Procurement) dog and pony show has Oakville lined up for a new hospital. That it's new, is about all we know, as the secrecy surrounding the details leaves townspeople like mushrooms in the dark.

We don't actually know what we will be getting for our money, nor what we will ultimately be paying.

The process is an epic failure for the people of Oakville, but not for all parties. The consortium can look forward to managing hundreds of millions in spending, with a promise of secure revenues for 30 years. Nice work with great percentages during lean times.

Our municipal AFP supporters can also be considered winners by association.

The AFP model blends public funding with private financing expertise at a significant cost to the people of Oakville.

It is the associated private financing that really drives up the overall cost of the build-out. Why must Oakville pay an additional two percentage points, when the Province is the primary funding source? Why does the Province allow the municipalities to be used this way?

Follow the money and you understand why it's a public/private arrangement. The AFP model is designed to move money (lots of it) from the public to the private sector.

The new hospital is merely a vehicle to transport the payload.

This project has been in the works for the past 10 years. Hospital renewal has been left off the municipal agenda, so that a "take it or leave it" offer, could be thrown out as a solution.

Sadly, the present hospital, even now, has adequate adjacent lands to provide for plenty of expansion at much less cost. Much of the land is already in the Town's hands and more could be procured.

Had an honest effort been made over the past 10 years, better procure ment efforts could have been implemented. We'd be well on our way with much greater control over the project. That was never allowed to happen.

Instead, our old hospital will likely be taken down, at Oakville's expense. Expect that property, in combination with the adjacent school lands, to be bundled into a bungled land deal for a lucky developer. Wait for it. Mark my words.

On April 14, The Oakville Beaver throws its editorial weight behind the project. Are we surprised?

Municipal elections take place in October of this year. The new hospital might be a done deal, but it should be made an election issue.

Take note how your representatives vote and remember to vote come this October. If you can, voice your concerns before the April 19 Town council decision.

Craig Bell, Oakville

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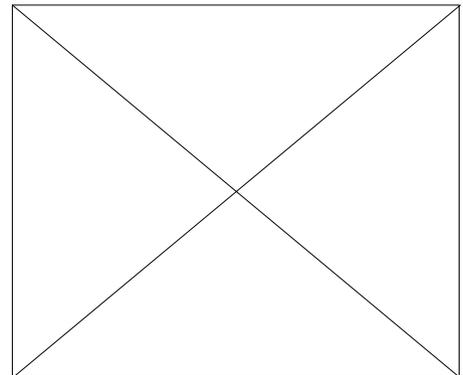
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