



David vs. Goliath

Milton Canadian Champion Editorial

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On the surface, Halton Region's recent resolution calling for the U. S. legislature to repeal 'Buy American' requirements in a number of already-passed or proposed bills may appear to be a case of David versus Goliath.

Members of the U. S. congress, which passed the legislation, likely don't know where Halton is. They may, however, soon find out. Taking the lead from Halton Hills council, which passed a similar resolution several weeks ago, Region officials last week adopted a resolution that also calls for Canadian municipalities to consider buying goods and materials from companies in countries that don't impose local trade restrictions against products manufactured in Canada.

The issue will be discussed at the executive committee of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities later this month and will likely be debated at the organization's annual general meeting in June. That could mean municipal leaders across the country jumping on the Halton bandwagon.

The matter came to a head when Halton Hills-based company Hayward Gordon found it was being hurt by American content requirements in U. S. federal funding bills for public projects. Specifically, the stimulus bill attached a condition to the \$90 billion it provides for infrastructure projects requiring that all iron, steel and manufactured goods used in the project originate from the U. S.

Companies, like Hayward Gordon, were losing out on projects in the U. S. because of this new protectionist policy while American companies were still winning contracts in Canada. Company owner John Hayward cried "foul" and he has successfully taken his message across the country via the media — with the support and blessings of Halton Hills council and Mayor Rick Bonnette.

Along the way, the "level playing field" of free trade between the nations became decidedly tilted in the Americans' favour. Equally disturbing have been recent reports that some huge U. S.-based employers like General Motors may not be able to keep past promises to maintain at least 20 per cent of its production in Canada.

It's hoped these made-in-Canada moves to fight back will capture the Americans' attention and get them to repeal their unfair protectionist legislation.

While it may be easy to scoff at Halton's shin-kicking of the U. S. giant, the U. S. would be wise to remember how the tale of David and Goliath turned out.