

M.F. SALES HERE REGION PLAN

# Northumberland restructur

COBOURG (Staff) — It's been accepted, rejected, loved, hated, denounced, debated and, on Sept. 29, 1977, it was approved.

That day, after an emotional discussion, Northumberland County Council voted 27 to 13 in favor of restructuring local government in the county.

David Gray, deputy reeve of Hope Township, compared restructuring to Canadian Confederation. "When confederation was brought about both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were opposed to it. I am sure you will agree confederation has been beneficial.

"The same thing is at stake here. If we don't restructure, Northumberland county may not be a viable vehicle, and I do not think we want that to happen."

Since September, restructuring has been the subject of intense debate in almost all of the 15 municipal councils in the county. Its opponents say restructuring will increase taxes and decrease the councillors' accessibility to the public. Its supporters say restructuring will make local government more efficient and keep the county together.

The provincial government is recommending the county's 15 municipalities be united to form seven.

Most of the opposition to the move has come from the rural and eastern areas of the county: the townships of Hamilton, Seymour, Brighton and Cramahe.

One of the most active people opposing restructuring has been Seymour Township Reeve Ken Parr. Last December, Mr.

also said that for most Hamilton Township residents, taxes would decrease after restructuring.

Despite his paper, many people's fears of restructuring — groundless or not — still exist.

The provincial government and the county organized a series of public meetings this month to try to inform people of the details of restructuring.

All meetings were well attended and almost all of those who spoke were against restructuring.

The same fears were expressed at all of the meetings: that a restructured government was nothing more than regional government in disguise; that taxes would increase after restructuring; that restructur-

ing was being forced on the people.

George Ashe, parliamentary assistant to Darcy McKeough, was chairman of the meetings. He denied that restructuring was being forced on the people. County council, he pointed out at the Port Hope meeting, voted in favor of it.

Hamilton Township resident Jim Pollock-Marshall said a public vote on restructuring should be held. "Why not have a referendum? It's a democratic system, then it's our decision."

Mr. Ashe, however, said a public vote could not be held on every important issue. He said the county councillors had to make decisions for the public vote could not be held on every

important issue. He said the county councillors had to make decisions for the public.

## SHIFT IN SERVICES

Wilfred Day, chairman of the Port Hope planning board, asked why the province is proposing that planning and water and sewer services be made the responsibility of the county.

Darcy McKeough made the proposal at a meeting with county councillors Feb. 6 in Cobourg. He said county planning would mean the disbanding of local planning boards.

In a 48-page report he presented then, Mr. McKeough said that planning would be effective only if it were done by the county. Water and sewer service, he said, are "an important implementation tool that

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One of the most active people opposing restructuring has been Seymour Township Reeve Ken Parr. Last December, Mr. Parr organized a referendum of the approximately 4,200 taxpayers in the township.

"If they're against restructuring — and I believe 90 per cent of them will be — then we'll try to pull out of the county," he said at the time.

His prediction was close. About 92 per cent of the 1,869 people who replied were against restructuring. But that number represents 44 per cent of the taxpayers.

Since December, Mr. Parr has not tried to have his township secede from the county. An assistant to Darcy McKeough, minister of Treasury, Economics, and Intergovernmental Affairs (TEIGA), said a township can't secede from a county.

Tom MacMillan said there were no independent townships in Ontario.

### THREE MAIN REASONS

Mr. Parr, 1977 county warden, said there were three main reasons he opposed restructuring. The township, he said, would lose its road subsidy and taxes would therefore increase. Councillors, now part-time, would become full-time employees, he said, "then we'd have to pay full-time councillors and that would be too costly." The final reason was that the township would lose its name after amalgamation with the town of Campbellford.

"If you lose your name, your township is gone," he said.

Since the Seymour referendum, other townships have asked for a public vote on restructuring.

The Hamilton Township Ratepayers Association passed a resolution Jan. 9, asking that the township council organize a referendum. Sam Hearst, association president, said the members felt restructuring was being forced on them by the provincial government.

The township council refused to hold the referendum. Reeve Lloyd Williams said council sent a questionnaire on restructuring to township residents in November, 1974.

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Reeve Lloyd Williams has favored restructuring since it was first proposed in 1975. Mr. Williams ran unsuccessfully for county warden in January. His main reason for running, he said, was to help implement restructuring.

Mr. Williams has continued to fight for restructuring. Earlier this month, he presented township council with a paper he hoped would help end the "groundless fears" many people have on restructuring. The nine page paper is typed, single-spaced, on foolscap. It gives in detail reasons why the county should restructure, why some people oppose restructuring, and its financial effect on the county.

#### **SUPPORT FOR RESTRUCTURING**

One of the best reasons to support restructuring, he said, is that it will make government in the county more democratic. "In the present Northumberland County, we do not have a democratically representative county council." Alnwick Township, with about 800 residents, has two representatives on county council. Hamilton Township, with about 9,000 residents, also has two county council representatives. Mr. Williams said that after restructuring, representation will be based on population.

Mr. Williams also said most people who oppose restructuring "are the residents who normally pay little attention to political matters, but who, at this time, are reacting out of fear of the unknown."

In his paper, Mr. Williams



# ing approved but debate continues

would accompany the planning responsibility at the county level."

Those two proposals have caused a lot of opposition to restructuring. March 13, Port Hope town council passed a resolution asking that the county delay restructuring for two years.

"A delay is as good as telling the government to get out of our lives," Coun. Roger Carr said. Mr. Carr wrote a nine-page report explaining why restructuring should be delayed.

He said Mr. McKeough's proposal to restructure the county is different from the one county council accepted. Mr. Carr said the county voted in favor of restructuring because local

municipalities were going to keep control of planning and water and sewer services.

An official of TEIGA said the proposal that county council accepted was not a final agreement. He said he's had meetings with county councillors during the past three years and changes to the original proposal were discussed then.

In Cobourg last month, Mr. McKeough also said county council could reverse its decision to restructure the county.

But if it did, it would probably have "one dandy legal bill" to pay for annexation hearings before the Ontario Municipal Board.

He said towns such as Cobourg and Port Hope would try to annex land from surrounding townships.

Northumberland, he said, also has the dubious honor of having had more restructuring studies done than any other county in the province. Mr. McKeough said that 27 studies costing more than \$1 million have been done on Northumberland. The studies were paid by the province and the county.

The process leading to restructuring began in 1973. That year, the provincial government proposed that Port Hope, Cobourg and the townships of Hope and Hamilton become a part of the Durham region. Northumberland residents objected and the proposal was dropped.

Northumberland did, however, agree to participate in a study to determine the

strengths and weaknesses of its local government. In 1975, Donald King submitted his

study to county council. The study proposed ways of improving local government.

The only other restructuring county in Ontario is Oxford the Niagara area.

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