

Plunkett report urges two big counties

Spooner unveils report

One hundred and nine councillors, school board chairmen, reporters, and photographers from Halton and Peel Counties rushed to grab up printed copies of the Plunkett Report at 7.28 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 29.

The auditorium of the Catholic Youth Centre on Morden Rd. in Oakville became one of near-bedlam Thursday when the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Hon. W. J. Spooner announced the unveiling of the long-awaited study. A table where close to 1,000 copies of the report were spread out, was emptied within two minutes, as officials and press scurried to get their hands on the report that was designed to shape the future of the two counties.

Plunkett's recommendations — and they are only recommendations — will require "careful consideration and serious study" in the weeks ahead, Mr. Spooner predicted. He emphasized the Plunkett findings will not be acted on until all the municipalities involved have a chance to study them and make a report back to the Minister.

He expects their written comments on the Plunkett review in his hands by December 31 — an indication that the next three months will be interesting ones in local municipal history.

Thursday's gathering was arranged simply for the mass distribution of the report — and not for discussion of its contents. Indeed, the weighty 126 page report takes nearly three hours to read.

The Minister emphasized that the names Plunkett gave the two proposed regional government units — the Urban County of Mississauga and the Rural County of Peel-Halton — the not definite recommendations but only used to describe the two areas.

"We cannot carry on as we are now in municipal government in the province. We have to make progress. This is the start . . .", Mr. Spooner suggested.

Now it is up to each municipality and boards within the municipalities to study the report fully and comment to the Minister. He suggested some recommendations in the report might not be acceptable, and local bodies might want to make additional recommendations.

Head table guests at the dinner were Mr. Spooner, his Deputy Minister Bill Palmer, M.P.P.s George A. Kerr of Halton and William G. Davis of Peel, D.M.A. special advisor Dr. Lorne Cumming, and Wardens H. H. Hinton of Halton and Jack Graham of Peel.



ESQUESING AND NASSAGAWEYA REEVES — Staff Photo
George Leslie, left, and William Coulter, right, are shown discussing the Plunkett Commission's "Peel-Halton Local Government Review" with deputy minister of municipal affairs J. W. Palmer at the unveiling dinner in Oakville Thursday evening.

North rural county

The proposed Peel-Halton rural county to encompass most of the lands in the two present counties north of the Base Line (with the addition of Milton and excluding Brampton and Bramalea) includes six townships, two villages and three towns.

Plunkett favors a single county government of 14 members which could govern the county, but hand back some local responsibilities to local public service commissions in Milton, Georgetown, Acton and Bolton. The county government would take over planning, roads, welfare, parks, assessment, and garbage disposal and debt management.

The four local public service commissions would administer water supply and distribution, sewage disposal and collection, garbage collection, zoning, road and street maintenance, fire protection, police and recreation.

A tax rate would be levied in each of these four municipalities for locally provided services. A chairman and two members would form the local commission, and their elections should be consolidated. Two of the three Milton members would also be members of the new county council; one each from Acton and Bolton would sit on both councils, and all three members of the Georgetown commission would hold the dual role.

An executive committee will also be necessary, as in the southern urban set-up. It would be composed of the mayor plus one representative from the urban communities and one from the rural communities.

Thirteen councillors for the county body would be elected by districts — Acton 1, Georgetown 3, Milton 2, Bolton 1, Albion 1, Caledon and Caledon East 1, Chinguacousy and Toronto Gore 2, Esquimesing and Nassagaweya 2 — and the mayor

would be elected at large. Councillors would thus represent between 2,075 and 4,562 constituents.

Term of office is suggested as three years, with a review of the system every 10 years.

Services required in this new county would be more limited than in the southern urban parcel. Plunkett suggests department heads would be a director of assessment, director of public works, director of planning, director of finance and county treasurer, medical officer of health, and county clerk and chief licence officer. A full-time fire marshal and a full-time welfare officer may be needed.

He suggests Ontario Provincial Police could handle policing through a contract. If not, a county police force could be administered by a separate police commission, as in the south.

A commissioner of administration may also be necessary.

Present hydro commissions in Bolton, Acton, Georgetown and Milton should continue, as there is no point in considering amalgamation due to size and distances. The townships all purchase hydro from Ontario Hydro.

Existing library boards would be abolished and public library service would be a responsibility of the county governmental structure. However, a citizens' library advisory board might be helpful, he suggests.

New northern county

Here is a table showing present or recent figures on the make-up of the 11 present municipalities Needs Study commissioner Plunkett proposes to band together to form the "Rural County of Peel-Halton".

(Note — Chinguacousy figures include Bramalea holdings, which would be removed and placed in the southern "urban county" if the Plunkett suggestion is adopted.)

Column Designation: 1 — 1964 Population; 2 — 1980 Forecast; 3 — 1964 Assessment; 4 — Acreage; 5 — Road, street mileage; 6 — No. of Councillors; 7 — Staff Employed; 8 — No. Boards or Commissions; 9 — No. of Members.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Toronto Gore	1,177	2,000	1,662,460	15,410	40	5	5	1	5
Albion	3,400	3,200	4,333,540	57,410	154	5	11	2	8
Chinguacousy	11,691	52,000	19,785,020	75,954	232	7	111	3	12
Caledon	3,929	4,500	4,947,360	74,460	186	5	9	2	8
Caledon East	663	600	529,265	400	3	5	6	5	24
Bolton	2,075	2,200	2,405,685	660	10	9	31	3	34
Georgetown	11,374	19,400	15,393,710	2,850	46	9	31	3	34
Milton	6,165	11,200	8,956,080	1,033	18	11	38	9	52
Acton	4,295	6,900	6,846,045	972	14	9	14	6	34
Esquimesing	6,885	7,600	9,708,375	66,071	185	5	10	3	17
Nassagaweya	2,594	3,000	4,366,435	46,800	140	5	8	2	12
Totals	54,248	112,600	78,933,975	341,300	1,028	71	243	39	206

* — 3 part time employees only.

The present Halton County embraces 236,865 acres, or 370 square miles. The present Peel has 300,734 acres or 470 square miles. The total area of the two counties is more than three times the size of Metro Toronto. There are 21 incorporated municipalities in the two present counties.

Answers to briefs

Why did the needs study special commissioner decide to split what is now Halton and Peel into two new counties, one urban and one rural, on an east-west parallel? What were his reasons for not retaining the "status quo" of local boards and councils? What did he think of the multitude of varying ideas presented in briefs by local officials?

A general modernization of administration was certainly necessary, he points out in his 126 page report. Even the people in the two counties agreed there were a number of urgent problems which could be settled by a larger administration unit.

During public hearings in the two counties in March of this year, Mr. Plunkett received 36 briefs — 13 from Peel and 23 from Halton. Only four of the briefs opposed any form of reorganization; 20 favored some reorganization, and 12 expressed no objections to reorganizations. Not too many submitting briefs agreed on what form the reorganization should take.

A revamped county system as some suggested, which

would give the present two county councils more power, was considered impractical. The southern municipalities are lacking in "representation by population" and if they received more voice at county council, the voice of the northern rural areas would be muted, Mr. Plunkett suggested.

A two-tier system of government was suggested, along the Metro line, with the county government receiving more responsibility while local councils would be retained. Mr. Plunkett thought these briefs were based on strong nostalgia or sentiment to keep the local municipal units intact. He said if the counties gained more power, it would leave the municipalities little responsibility, and nothing to justify their existence. Metro style government would make municipal government more complicated than it is now, he said, and would still not solve the area's problems.

Oakville's suggestion to form a single government embracing all of Halton, half of Peel and certain parts of Wentworth and Dufferin "has considerable merit, but would be inappropriate in that it tries to absorb too large an area with both urban and rural patterns of development," he noted.

The "status quo" requested by some groups submitting briefs was also found unreasonable by the commissioner. He

devoted four pages of his report to tearing down a Chinguacousy Township plea to retain the township as is, and to prove the so-called "new town" development is more a part of the total development of Brampton than a separate Chinguacousy development.

Northern officials were wondering Thursday, when the Plunkett Review of local government was released to the public.

Minister of Municipal Affairs the Hon. W. J. Spooner, in briefly reviewing the special commissioner's overall recommen-

dations, went into detail in describing the proposed urban county at the south which would include the burgeoning Burlington, Oakville, Toronto Township, Brampton and Bramalea.

Then he got around to a description of the northern rural county proposal, mentioning it briefly. He read out the proposed name "Rural County of

Peel-Halton" and then said, "I won't bother reading the names of all the municipalities involved . . ."

Deputy Reeve Charles Menefy of Milton, sitting at a table nearby, was visibly miffed by the obvious slight to the smaller areas. He sighed and mumbled "thanks very much".

"Yes, let's all go home and cry," came the terse reply.

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The Acton Free Press, Thursday, October 6, 1966

B5

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AND WHEREAS humanitarian and economic considerations imperatively demand that improved fire prevention measures be undertaken to prevent this economic waste and tragic loss of life in order that the nation's prosperity may be maintained;

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October 6, 1966.



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