

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Minister's proposal:

Dissolve Acton merge into big municipality

Merger of the entire counties of Halton and Peel into one giant "super-metro" regional government, complete with a series of six or seven lower-tier local councils, was predicted as a possibility for 1971 when the Hon. Darcy McKeough, Minister of Municipal Affairs for Ontario, unveiled his suggested blueprint for the area last week.

McKeough, in a formal presentation to about 200 municipal officials from the two counties in Toronto Wednesday, outlined a "tentative proposal" lumping everything from Burlington on the south to Amaranth Township on the north, from Nassagaweya on the west to Albion on the east, into one giant regional unit. The new region would encompass about 900 sq. miles and swallow up 11 towns, two villages and all or parts of eight townships.

Under the two-tier system outlined, lower-tier councils of up to seven persons would handle local administration in six or seven "area municipalities".

Acton officials were non-committal about the proposal when it was presented but many of them are now voicing strong opinions on the merger since they've had time to study it. The minister proposed to merge Acton, Georgetown and Esquesing township from 15 Sideroad north into one large municipality. Population of the "area municipality" would be over 34,000 and it would get one representative on the regional council.

Mayor Les Duby said Acton had already committed itself to the idea of regional government but wondered if the town should not be oriented towards Guelph rather than Georgetown. "We have some responsibility to Guelph for use of hospitals there," he said, "and they could very justifiably make an appeal for support for hospitals."

The town will continue to operate normally until all the details of the set-up are settled but the minister made it clear that the government was committed to the program and would let no municipality veto it.

Esquesing officials did not seem tickled with the fact their township would be split in half—with the lower portion joining the Milton unit and the upper half lumped in with Acton and Georgetown in another regional unit.

The proposal raised hackles in Nassagaweya, where cries of "disfranchisement" and "undemocratic" greeted the minister's announcement. Officials from the township were aghast at a suggestion lands south of 25 Sideroad could join the Milton-based unit, and the rest of the township could be given to Wellington County.

Mr. McKeough defended his government's decision to proceed with regional government, basing part of his reason on the Report of the Ontario Committee of Taxation which pointed out that "the inadequate size of most municipal units has resulted in a chaotic system of provincial grants to local government that cannot adequately compensate for inherent financial weaknesses."

The Committee said it could not hope to devise a tax and revenue system that is "simple, equitable, efficient, adequate and conducive to sound growth... without changes in the structure of government."

"Residents of Ontario," the minister stated, "are no longer prepared to tolerate the lack of co-ordination in the provision of regional services and the lack of direction." He also cited the existence of other fragmentary and overlapping municipal and special purpose jurisdictions as hurrying the process along.

The Peel-Halton area was picked as a unit since a sense of community exists with elements of diversity. The Minister said he was convinced the Peel-Halton area can be suitably incorporated into a system of large urban-centred regions. Similar patterns of land use and the same pressures of urbanization mark both counties, he claimed.

Regional units would come into effect, the minister hoped by January, 1971. Town, township and county councils in Peel and Halton will be scrapped to make way for the new system of government.

"You're firing all the volunteer help," one woman representative at the meeting charged, "and the paid help is going to take over."

Mr. McKeough said he envisioned six or seven local units of government. The seventh would be the town of Burlington which is now part of a provincially sponsored local government review of the Hamilton-Wentworth area. It could or could not be part of the new system. The Department favored it, he said.

The proposal embraces a 900 square mile area with a population of over 400,000. It would be more than three times the size of Metro Toronto. The minister also suggested the village of Erin and part of the township of Erin in Wellington county and the town of Orangeville in Dufferin county be included in the regional unit.

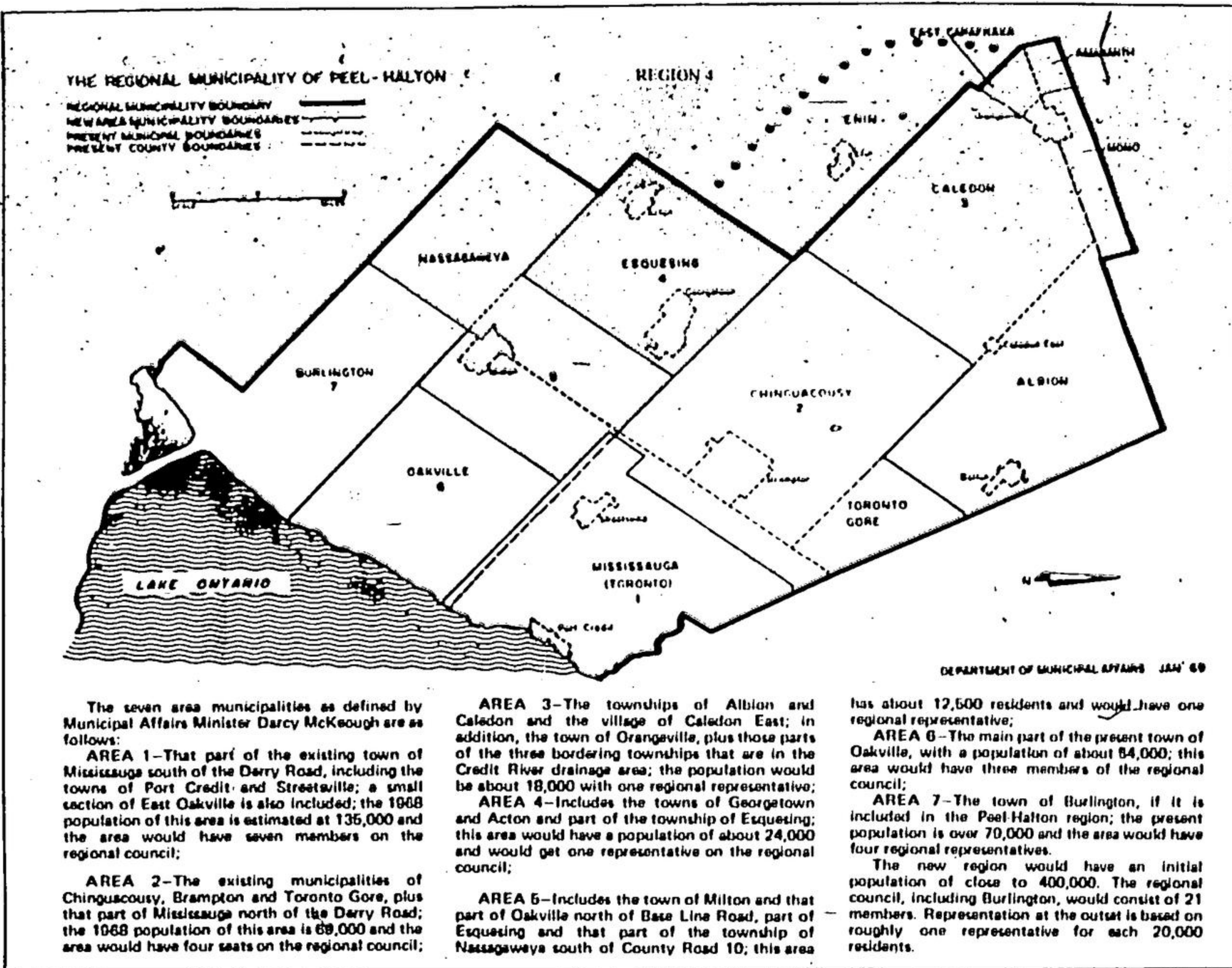
Mr. McKeough said the shape of the seven large urban areas followed the drainage pattern set by the watersheds and this would facilitate in planning for major sewer projects and future recreational and residential development.

"We must move more closely to the democratic concept of representation by population," the minister stated, a statement which representatives from Nassagaweya and the other rural townships promptly challenged after his speech. Mr. McKeough said a difficult scheme of multiple voting now puts the preponderance of power in urban-oriented hands at the county level. He cited Peel and the town of Mississauga as an example.

He proposed urban centres combined with a large rural area to balance separate concerns, which rural representatives at the meeting charged would leave them with no voice at all in government.

Mr. McKeough said the government viewed with alarm the prospect of Toronto or Hamilton ever joining in the vicinity of the Credit River or Oakville Creek. Consequently

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The seven area municipalities as defined by Municipal Affairs Minister Darcy McKeough are as follows:

AREA 1—That part of the existing town of Mississauga south of the Derry Road, including the towns of Port Credit and Streetsville; a small section of East Oakville is also included; the 1968 population of this area is estimated at 135,000 and the area would have seven members on the regional council;

AREA 2—The existing municipalities of Chinguacousy, Brampton and Toronto Gore, plus that part of Mississauga north of the Derry Road; the 1968 population of this area is 69,000 and the area would have four seats on the regional council;

AREA 3—The townships of Albion and Caledon and the village of Caledon East; in addition, the town of Orangeville, plus those parts of the three bordering townships that are in the Credit River drainage area; the population would be about 18,000 with one regional representative;

AREA 4—Includes the towns of Georgetown and Acton and part of the township of Esquesing; this area would have a population of about 24,000 and would get one representative on the regional council;

AREA 5—Includes the town of Milton and that part of Oakville north of Base Line Road, part of Esquesing and that part of the township of Nassagaweya south of County Road 10; this area

has about 12,500 residents and would have one regional representative;

AREA 6—The main part of the present town of Oakville, with a population of about 54,000; this area would have three members of the regional council;

AREA 7—The town of Burlington, if it is included in the Peel-Halton region; the present population is over 70,000 and the area would have four regional representatives.

The new region would have an initial population of close to 400,000. The regional council, including Burlington, would consist of 21 members. Representation at the outset is based on roughly one representative for each 20,000 residents.

Cobblehill Rd. residents oppose O.H.C. housing

Cobblehill Road area residents oppose the locating of geared-to-income housing and senior citizens' units in their locality.

With signatures of 47 out of 55 residents contacted, a group of seven presented a petition to council Tuesday evening. Spokesman for the group was Trevor Forbes, backed by Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Coe, Mrs. Ren Guest, Ivan Copot, Malcolm MacPherson and Colin Bendl.

"We do not expect a ready answer," said Mr. Forbes. "We wish to be provocative. An alternative site would be better to our way of thinking."

Their brief read as follows: "We wish to establish, through this petition, that we are not

oppose the principles of providing adequate housing for the elderly citizens of our town or the provision of, low rental housing units, but of the proposed location.

"In assessing the present proposals of the Ontario Housing Corporation, we feel the proposed area, namely Cobblehill Road, is inadequate for such a project.

"We feel that the present R2 zoning for single family dwellings is the only type of dwelling suitable to this area, due mainly to its physical aspects and location.

"We list reasons supporting our assessment for your consideration below:

- "(1)—Unsuitable for Senior Citizens (a)—The steep incline of the hills in the area will make it difficult for walking. (b)—Poor access and greater distance than is perhaps necessary for them to commute to town (stores, mail and churches). (c)—Sidewalk provisions either non-existent, inadequate or in bad state of maintenance and repair on all routes leading to town. (d)—High and hazardous traffic incidence on Hwy. 25.

"(2)—Unsuitable for Multiple Family Units (a) A heavier than normal increase in motor vehicle traffic incidence will congest the already poor access roads. (b) The Cobblehill Road outlet empties into a very hazardous section of Hwy. 25. The sudden contours impede visibility at all times and the situation is extreme with the morning sun compounding the problems. (c) The Mill Street route has a complex of hollows, hills and bridges which are hazardous to both motorist and pedestrian. (d) The relation of the location to schools will further complicate and compound conditions. (e) Although the condition is already existent, the ready access to swamp, lake and dam with a heavier than normal influx of children could lead to disastrous and complicated problems."

Commented Mayor Les Duby mournfully, "We've been trying over many months to find a suitable location. We have been fouled up in four areas that were handier to the centre of town." Problems included proximity to the tracks, low-lying land, too high cost, or unsuitability to C.M.H.A. There are 15 or 18

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John Goy graduates

John Goy Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. John Goy, received his Bachelor of Science degree at convocation at the University of Guelph last Friday afternoon. Just seven received the B. Sc. degrees from Chancellor George Drew at winter convocation. There were 125 graduates altogether, the majority of them in Arts.

After the graduation ceremony, friends and relatives of the Goy's attended a reception

Pedestrian hit by car at Mill-Main

Struck by a car at the Mill-Main corner, Mrs. Maude Chisholm was taken to Guelph General Hospital Monday evening and later released. She suffered a broken wrist and bruised leg.

The accident occurred at 6.20 p.m. and Cons. Roy Wood investigated.

He is seeking witnesses to the accident, and would like anyone who saw it to contact the police.

Mrs. Florence Elizabeth Dale of R. 1, Acton, was driving north on Main St. when she struck Mrs. Chisholm.

Mrs. Chisholm had been crossing from Lamb Real Estate corner to McLeod's store.

Mr. Chisholm was treated at the Medical Centre by Dr. C. Hutchison and taken to Guelph General Hospital.

at the Cotten Club, Guelph. He is now associated with his father at Goy Transport.

Acton's stand on Peel-Halton to be relayed

County councillors generally want "no part of union with Peel", reveal Dr. Frank Oakes relayed to Acton council Tuesday. At county council meeting Tuesday afternoon, the seven reeves of Halton were named a committee to study the regional government proposal which would join the two counties.

County councillors are taking this very seriously, Mr. Oakes asserted. They want Halton to retain its identity.

A special meeting of council was called for Wednesday, February 5, to prepare Acton's stand. This will be relayed by Dr. Oakes to the new committee.

Suggested ways of dividing Halton into larger regional government units will be considered. Deputy-reeve Tyler, who had

also been at county council that afternoon, declared "Acton will lose all its identity. The little man will become a number." There are lots of problems in Peel.

Added Mr. Greer, "We're the back end of the county. Anything they don't want will be shoved to the back end. It's going to come. All we can do is fight and try to get the best of it."

A couple of councillors disagreed mildly. Mr. McKenzie stated that a system adequate 100 years ago is obsolete now.

Mr. Coats said the towns bordering Toronto didn't lose their identity with amalgamation. Acton's big enough to pull its weight.

Mr. Marks wondered if too much emphasis was being placed on identity. We should look at the broader plan, he said.



DON FORD, 123 CRESCENT ST., had a halfbreath escape when this car and the 3.08 p.m. C.N.R. Chicago train collided on the Mill St. crossing Monday afternoon. Shaken, but otherwise unharmed, the youth was treated for shock after the front end of the auto was sheared by the eastbound train. Ford said he did not see the warning flasher signals. It was the second accident where a driver collided with a train at the crossing in recent months and walked away from the accident.—(Staff Photo)

Train, car crunch Monday at crossing

In another accident at the Mill St. C.N.R. crossing, a car driven by Donald Ford was struck late Monday afternoon by a passenger train.

Mr. Ford, Crescent St., told police he was blinded by the sun.

His car was struck by the through train, receiving \$1200 damage, but he received only minor injuries. He was alone in the car at the time.

He had been driving west on Mill when the accident occurred

Engineer of the five-car passenger train was John Gray, Sarnia. The train was southbound on the way from Sarnia to Toronto. The train was held up for a short period.

Damage to the train was estimated at only \$25 to the engine steps.

The Ford car was towed away to John's Texaco garage.

Cons. Kresler investigated and a charge was laid.

Another car was struck by a train there in November. An Acton woman was struck and killed by a train there last year.