

# The Acton Free Press

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Second Section.

## Opinion forum

### Lively Chamber of Commerce annual discusses regional government plans

The subject of regional government in Peel-Halton turned the usually serene Chamber of Commerce annual meeting Wednesday into one of the liveliest sessions to date and lined an audience studded with municipal and provincial officials up on either side of the regional fence.

Retiring Chamber president Paul Nielsen, a downtown merchant, was deliberately provocative in an opening address, charging the ratepayers were forgotten in plans for regional development and it was merely a dialogue between politicians.

His provocative statements had the desired effect. A dialogue ensued among Halton West M.P.P. George Kerr, Nassagaweya reeve Bill Hoey, Department of Municipal Affairs senior research officer J. Richard Picherack, Mayor Les Duby, Councillor Peter Marks, Georgetown mayor "Steamer" Emmerson, former Reeve Bert Hinton, former mayor Ben Rachlin, deputy-reeve Ted Tyler and others that kept going long after new C. of C. president John Shadbolt declared the meeting closed.

Mr. Nielsen admitted he wasn't against regional government per se (by itself) but felt there were many questions the Minister of Municipal Affairs Darcy McKeough and his staff had left unanswered. He said he could not endorse any program until he knew the facts and it was up to Mr. McKeough to explain the necessity for change. Otherwise, he charged, the electorate could become more apathetic or even worse — revolt!

If a foreign power, the communist party or student activists did what the Department of Municipal Affairs is doing, the situation would demand defense by force, Mr. Nielsen felt, but the Department is immune.

"I do not believe that highly paid professional managers will do a better job than local people who spent their time and effort in making a particular town better," he declared.

A wider tax base with regional government? Perhaps the past C. of C. head surmised it was simply a way for the province to avoid grants and shared programs, particularly with schools.

But the regional government plan also had some eloquent defenders including former reeve Bert Hinton who was just as outspoken in declaring the C. of C. had loaded the meeting with speakers against the regional proposal. He lauded freshman councillor Peter Marks for keeping his mind open on the subject.

He urged those in attendance to stifle the idea Acton was oriented towards Guelph just because people shop there and use the hospitals. Acton is in the Credit watershed, not the Grand, he maintained. Concern that regional government would wipe Acton from the map was not a true concept, "Acton is going to stay Acton, because we, the people, are Acton."

Mr. Hinton said Georgetown's growth was their problem and it would be a good idea to let the provincial government — the best in Canada — implement its ideas.

"Esquing and the noisy part of Nassagaweya are going to start paying their way, something they've never done," the former reeve declared. "We're progressing towards an economic unit that can do things."

At this point Mr. Hinton asked new Chamber head John Shadbolt if he wanted him to quit. Mr. Shadbolt grinned and politely uttered a "Yes, please," bringing Halton West M.P.P. George Kerr to tilt his lance at the regional windmill.

Drawing his pipe, with a glance at Mr. Hinton, the Halton member smiled and said, "Bert should work for the Department in public relations." Then he conceded it would be difficult to convince anyone in Nassagaweya there was any advantage to municipal government.

He said a change in financing was necessary but confessed he thought Nassagaweya shouldn't have a tax rate comparable to Burlington's. He also couldn't see Burlington going with Hamilton or a split-up Nassagaweya. However Mr. Kerr outlined advantages in planning and garbage disposal regional government would help. For instance, he said, a certain street with one side in Oakville and the other in Burlington would not

have heavy industry on one side and residential development on the other with regional government.

Mr. Kerr said he would sit back and watch the results and if that didn't work he'd "have to work on the minister himself."

Back to the fray came Paul Nielsen, charging an amalgamation between Peel and Halton was unequal to start with since Peel's per capita debt was \$200 more than Halton's. Comparing Acton to Georgetown and Acton's "excellent ratio of industrial-residential assessment," he foresaw only difficulties for Acton ratepayers.

Mayor Les Duby was next on the program and he squared accounts with former reeve Hinton by stating Acton was in favor of some form of regional government. "We're just questioning the terms of reference," he declared. "The Queen's Park proposal wasn't our concept of Peel Halton regional government," the mayor said, referring to the years of study and thought he had given the matter as a member and chairman of C.O.R.D.C.

Councillor Peter Marks, admitting he had some reservations but nevertheless endorsed the McKeough proposal as the decision of experts in the field. "Taxes are the main issue," he stated supporting the idea of fruitful discussion. "Queen's Park could burn down," he said, "and we couldn't sneeze." He listed the services the province helps pay for with grants including the library, sidewalks and roads and charged the town's "inefficiencies were subsidized" by the province.

Regional government, said Mr. Marks, would put the ratepayers more in control of their destiny and eliminate inequalities.

Reeve Bill Hoey of Nassagaweya township, a latecomer, injected a note of resolution in the meeting when he stated the township was firmly resolved regional government should happen and he personally would do all he could to implement it. "But it is 20 years late," he protested, "and Nassagaweya is unhappy

with the irresponsible manner in which it was presented."

"A man on the Department staff only two years drew the separation line which divides Nassagaweya," he charged. "He saw no benefit resulting to any community which added the farmland in northern Nassagaweya since it was industry which paid the bills."

"Rural Ontario is not represented at all on the council," he said, and they must get it regardless of rep by pop. He envisioned a situation where 100,000 immigrants could effectively disenfranchise rural residents by moving into Halton.

He scored two tier government and lauded Acton mayor Les Duby for his groundwork in regional government.

"Mayor Duby here has done more work than anyone in the province on this," he declared. Regional government should be what the people in the area want, he continued, not what people imported from anywhere else want especially when they didn't even know where 25 Sideroad is.

J. Richard Picherack, the Department of Municipal Affairs senior research officer, took umbrage at Mr. Hoey's remark stating he had drawn the line which separated northern Nassagaweya from the south. "I suggest there was quite a lot of thought before the line was drawn," he said. The boundary was drawn so it would follow the watershed which flows into the Grand River but admitted there was no way to cut Nassagaweya up until another region was established.

Mr. Picherack endorsed Councillor Marks' conception of



NASSAGAWAYA REEVE Bill Hoey, right, tells regional government. Mr. Rachlin is having difficulty visualizing Mr. Hoey's opinions. (Staff Photo)

unequal capital debt worked out in defined areas so it wouldn't fall on ratepayers who didn't benefit. He disputed Reeve Hoey's remarks that the MTARTS study was not considered in the regional government proposal. Mr. Picherack also cited plans for satellite cities which must be subject to regional planning to establish a trunk sewer.

Mr. Hinton again rose to claim Acton had much more to gain from regional government and said he would have to stand unequivocally for "rep by pop." Carleton Ottawa are going ahead, he stated, and the remainder of the province would soon be following suit.

Carl Witzeck, a new member of the C. of C. executive said the major faults of the regional plan was too much emphasis in one or two areas. He felt all Ontario

should be regionalized so the self-sufficient regions could balance out inequalities in the power places.

Paul Nielsen remarked that unlike Councillor Marks and Reeve Hinton he didn't assume Darcy McKeough or anyone else will straighten out inequalities and he certainly never said so publicly. "Planners are obsessed with boundaries," he claimed. Mr. Nielsen said the whole project smacked of authoritarian pressure, and was not designed as a democratic expression.

Former mayor Ben Rachlin, however, felt Queen's Park was doing the only thing possible to work out a scheme equitable for all. He agreed to a reduction in the number of municipalities because the province was overgoverned and needed some changes.

Georgetown mayor Weldon Emmerson also fell in line with Mr. Rachlin's reasoning. He said the minister wanted dialogue and final legislation will arise from the reaction to the dialogue.

"It's just like the old saying," another member injected. "Keep your head up and never bend over in front of a Greek."

Reeve Hoey ended the official dialogue by saying he was disappointed that Acton mayor Les Duby, chairman of C.O.R.D.C. who'd done so much work towards regional government, had no voice in the final preparations, indicative he thought of the government's thinking.

The discussion continued after the official adjournment, sometimes cheek to jowl and often very heated.



PAST PRESIDENT Paul Nielsen tells Halton West M.P.P. George Kerr the Ontario government needs a more democratic expression of opinion in regional government plans. (Staff Photo)



NEW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE executive elected at Wednesday's meeting before the heated topic of regional government was initiated are, left to right, seated, past president Paul Nielsen, new president John Shadbolt and second vice president Orval Chapman. Standing, directors Don Lindsay, Fred Gordon, secretary Chris Schuts, directors John Coniglio and Carl Watzeck. Missing are vice-president John Rol, treasurer Ted Pratt, and directors Don Timmings and Earl Jollymore. (Staff Photo)

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### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Council of The Town of Acton  
has Authorized

## A PUBLIC MEETING

TO BE HELD  
**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26th at 8 P.M.**  
IN THE  
**ROBERT LITTLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**

The purpose of the meeting will be to review the proposal of the Ontario Housing Corporation for senior citizens dwelling and family units in the Town under the following headings:

1. PROPOSED LOCATION — COBBLEHILL ROAD
2. SPECIFICATIONS & PLANS OF CONSTRUCTION
3. FUTURE ADMINISTRATION

Members of Acton Council and representatives from Ontario Housing Corporation and Headway Corporation will be present.

All interested residents, and especially senior citizens, are urged to attend.

**J. Y. HURST,**  
Clerk - Administrator.

### OBITUARY

#### Dies in Jamaica during holiday

A well-known district resident Mrs. Arthur Scott of Georgetown died suddenly at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on Saturday, February 15. She was just concluding a three week holiday trip with her husband and Mr. and Mrs. Howard Holmes, also of Georgetown. Preparing to return home that day, she complained of pain and a doctor was called, but she died of a heart attack.

The two couples had travelled by plane and boat to many of the islands in the West Indies.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott operate Georgetown Transportation Company which operates a bus line and school buses. They had the Chevrolet-Oldsmobile franchise in Georgetown until Mr. Scott sold the business to Andrew Murray.

She belonged to the Business and Professional Women's Club and was a director of the North Halton Golf and Country Club.

Friends were received at the Harold C. McClure funeral home and a private funeral service was held there Wednesday of last week.

Mrs. Scott is survived by her husband; two daughters Sandra Duffy of Georgetown; Karen of Owen Sound and John at home; a sister Mrs. A. Law (Jean) of Vancouver B.C. and brothers Mervyn and Vernon Kirby of Glen Williams.