

Pare \$500,000 off \$9,000,000

Halton chops away at budget

Four budget-paring sessions last week helped Halton Region Council trim just over \$500,000 off its \$9,750,000 budget. All four standing committees of council, Finance and Administration, Planning, Public Works and Community Services, sat down to review their individual budgets at committee meetings held Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Councillors had refused to approve the budget at the \$9 million figure at a meeting July 17—they approved a motion calling for an across-the-board 10 percent cutback, then dumped the budget back into the lap of a confused regional treasurer Don Farmer. Farmer, his staff and the council had been working for months on the budget and it had supposedly been trimmed as much as possible before the \$9 million figure went to council that day.

Dollar here, there But most of the councillors accepted the challenge to cut back by a further 10 percent and for hours last week they pored over figures, squeezing a dollar here and a project there, delaying the hiring of more staff here and finding a few dollars that could be delayed to 1975 there. Regional Chairman Allan Masson summed it up as "an

exercise in absolute frustration." But the chopping sessions went on, and some cuts were made.

Community Services Committee tackled its challenge first and immediately agreed it could do nothing to cut the budgets of "outside" groups under its wing, like Children's Aid Society and the Halton Health Unit. Three proposals were reviewed for cutting back in the social and family services section of the budget, but none were found acceptable. (One suggestion was a 10 percent cut in staff salaries, which didn't find much favor.)

The only saving the committee saw was in Halton Manor expenses where, although administrator Stan Allen hadn't had time to go over his budget with a fine tooth comb, he felt he could cut \$30,000.

Grants paid Grants to organizations could not be cut, the committee agreed—all but two grants have already been paid out.

On Tuesday the planning committee reviewed its expenses and chopped a \$12,500 traffic study which it felt could be delayed to 1975. The planning budget was totalled at \$81,707 so the \$12,500 cut was more than the requested

10 percent.

Finance and Administration Committee sat down Wednesday morning to review the budgets under its control and the meeting went into overtime before the committee called it quits. The 9.30 a.m. meeting ran until 2.30 p.m. and overlapped a Works Committee meeting that started at 1.30.

Members decided the police budget, although it is an "outside" group, could be cut \$39,600 to round it off at an even \$4,700,000. They tackled the legal department's \$76,961 total and agreed to round it off at \$74,000, over objections from solicitor Noel Bates that the department might run out of money by October.

"We'll take it!" Word was received the Works Committee that afternoon was prepared to cut \$160,000, short \$60,000 of 10 percent of its total, and Councillor Mac Anderson, Oakville said "We'll take it!"

Other budgets were reviewed and committee members decided to leave them intact.

That afternoon works committee spent hours trimming and cutting and some projects were reduced or delayed to 1975. The committee ended up with cuts totalling \$224,715, more than the Finance Committee had expected that morning.

They trimmed \$43,000 from the administration section and \$38,715 from road maintenance in addition to several thousand dollars worth of road projects.

Reserve fund Much discussion was held on the provincial start-up grants (which hadn't been finalized last week.) The region's plan to keep a \$1 million reserve fund was also criticized by some councillors. "We shouldn't be taxing people for the future," Burlington Councillor Vern Connell told the treasurer.

money the province really should have provided. Discussion didn't resolve the controversy but passage of the total budget did—the \$1 million fund remains as a reserve.

Just 16 members of the 25-member council were on hand for Tuesday's meeting. It had originally been scheduled for Friday morning but was postponed to Tuesday because not enough members were available Friday. All five Halton Hills members were on hand but Milton Councillors Jim Watson and Marjorie Powys were absent, as were Jack Raftis, Dave Coons and Pat McLaughlin of Burlington, Gord Brown and Arch Donaghy of Oakville. Treasurer Don Farmer missed it too—he's on holidays.

The final budget was just \$648,195 below the estimates council had refused to pass at a meeting two weeks ago. At that time members called for a 10 per cent across-the-board cut but at four committee meetings last week a saving of just six per cent was attained.

"Austerity" Burlington Mayor George Harrington, mover of both motions, suggested 1974 should be "a year of austerity" for Halton.

The region's \$1 million reserve fund was also featured in Tuesday's budget discussions. There was talk of using money from this account to cover the shortfall on start-up costs but several objected to taxing Halton taxpayers this year for



HALTON COUNCILLORS have been laboring over budget cutbacks for the past week. After council ordered a sweeping 10 percent cutback in spending, each committee of council has been agonizing over the final cuts. "Man in the middle" has been Halton's treasurer Don Farmer (arrow), pictured here at a Finance and Administration Committee meeting with deputy clerk John Byrne (left), councillors George Harrington and Paul Preston (foreground) and Mac Anderson and Gordon Brown, facing camera.

Some councillors felt the emergency fund may be needed if the province doesn't come through with the total start-up fund requested by Halton, while others felt it would be less costly to set

aside reserve money now than have to borrow and pay high interest rates if the region runs short of money later in the year. Many of the areas where councillors wanted to call for

cutbacks were in the field of subsidizable spending, which made it awkward. Treasurer Farmer cautioned the committees that in cases where 75 per cent provincial grants are received, cutting a dollar from the budget meant cutting \$3 in provincial grants for a total of \$4 worth of services. Council planned to finalize its budget Tuesday.

Animal control called for wounded raccoon

A group of concerned children called the police last Wednesday when they discovered a raccoon on the porch of Gordon and Aileen Currie's house on Frederick Street. The police called the Halton Hills Animal Control and the children were warned to keep back in case the animal was rabid.

It was apparent that the raccoon had injured its feet in some way. The animal control officer thought that the raccoon had burnt itself, possibly from some industrial chemical.

The children who reported the incident included Marie LaMarsh, Judy Pink, Ron and Mark Murchison, Jeffrey, Kevin and Scott Bousfield, Joel Pink, Paul Gorjup, Donny Thornhill and Michael Daw.

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TOWN EMPLOYEE Sam Tennant is hard at work putting on the flat coat for the bandshell. The effort will be well worth the result. Halton Hills Works Committee ordered the facelift for the bandshell at the park gates.



DANNY HILLIER has that concentrated look of a man trying to hammer in two by two's successfully. This is part of the new railing on the top of the bandshell.

Say region "shafted" over start-up grants

Continued from Page 1 and Oakville areas will see a decrease this year while those in former areas known as Nassagaweya and Esqueving will see an increase. Rates range from a decrease of seven mills in Milton to an increase of four mills in what was Nassagaweya.

Most in south This year Burlington pays 43.32 per cent of the regional levy or \$3,961,922. Oakville takes 39.31 per cent or \$1,088,492 while Milton's \$631,657 share is 6.91 per cent and Halton Hills' \$957,192 share is 10.46 per cent of the regional total.

The province's offer of \$1 million in start-up grants, received part-way through Tuesday's meeting, upset the councillors. Finance Committee chairman Ric Morrow, Georgetown, figured it was about 40 per cent of what Halton asked for.

It includes: \$270,000 for the Region to disperse as it sees fit; \$130,000 for special sewer and water projects in Milton and Burlington; \$300,000 in financial grants to help make up interest due to borrowing, earmarked as \$125,000 for Burlington, \$110,000 for Oakville, \$25,000 for Milton and \$40,000 for Halton Hills; plus \$300,000 in special start-up grants to Milton and Halton Hills, \$150,000 each, to compensate for having to merge several area municipalities.

Not satisfied By comparison, Halton wanted \$1 million; Milton had asked for \$500,000; Halton Hills sought \$350,000; Burlington asked \$300,000. "I see no reason why we

should be satisfied," said Oakville Councillor Terry Mannell. He suggested going back to Queen's Park and asking the politicians to justify the \$1 million handout, like Halton had documented its requests.

Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett felt if the region's \$270,000 gift didn't all go to the police department, they would have to start laying off policemen.

"I think we are being shortchanged," said Burlington's Tom Sutherland. "The province is taking a callous approach to the costs of starting up a regional government." The million dollars was "a nice round figure but it's too cosy, too neat." He urged council to wait one week before setting its budget, but failed. "We have been shafted, we've been set up like sitting ducks," chimed in Councillor Mac Anderson. He said it was starting to sound like something from "Alice in Wonderland."

Treasurer gone Most councillors were in favor of sending a delegation back to Queen's Park to argue for more grants. Problem is, Ontario Treasurer John White left Saturday for a month's holiday in England and council doesn't expect the intergovernmental treasury department to make a move without his say-so. The 1974 budget was finally

approved, but the vote was different in the committee-of-the-whole session than it was in the regular council session of the meeting. In committee the vote was 12-3 for passing the budget; in open council a recorded vote was called and it was 10-5 with Councillors Vern Connell of Burlington, Len Coxe of Halton Hills, Anne Macarthur of Milton, Tom Sutherland of Burlington and Laurie Mannell of Oakville in opposition.

Council quickly approved two new motions relating to the budget, one dictating that in view of the shortfall on start-up grants, any future capital expenditures must be approved by the finance committee and council, and no further staff will be hired until the council approves. The second motion was a directive to the staff and department heads, that no overspending of budgets will be tolerated and infractions of the rule will be dealt with "severely."

Burlington Mayor George Harrington, mover of both motions, suggested 1974 should be "a year of austerity" for Halton.

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Chairman to boycott banks' presentation

Five major banks will make confidential presentations to Halton Regional Council's Finance and Administration Committee in September, in an effort to win the region's banking business.

But committee chairman Councillor Ric Morrow of Georgetown won't be there—he plans to boycott the meetings. "I have no wish to enter into personalities, I'm utterly opposed to this method," Morrow told the committee last week. "I will base my decisions on their written reports and our treasurer's recommendation."

Confidential Treasurer Don Farmer explained each bank will make a written presentation to the committee and follow it up with a personal presentation. Some plan to show slides or movies. He stressed the meetings would be confidential.

"I won't sit in the chair... or in the room," chairman Morrow said.

"I'll join you," chimed in MacAnderson, an Oakville councillor. Anderson later admitted a conflict of interest would likely keep him out of the room anyway—he's a shareholder in The Unity Bank which hasn't been

asked to make a presentation to council. Only banks with branches in Halton are on the list.

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