

# Should sell Acton on benefits of Halton Hills

by Gord Murray  
Halton Hills councillors should be out selling Actonians on the benefits of staying in Halton Hills Ward 3 Councillor Peter Pomeroy says in a recent interview.

This was just one of the ideas posed by the freshman councillor who lives in Norval and runs North Halton Sports on Main Street Georgetown.

Pomeroy jumped into the political ring for the first time last December. He tasted success right away, grabbing the second spot in the four man race for the two Ward 3 seats on council. He picked up 1,451 votes, 111 fewer than another political newcomer Walter Biehn who led the pack. Pomeroy handily defeated former Georgetown mayor and a veteran councillor Ern Hyde who was 492 votes behind and another rookie Dan Timmons who picked up 723 votes.

"I don't want Acton to leave Halton Hills," he declares. He sees no reason why Acton can't be part of Halton Hills and still retain its identity. A good step in that direction would be to stop referring to the former town as Ward One and call it Acton, he says. The same would apply to Esquering and Georgetown which are called Wards 2, 3 and 4.

Pomeroy thinks council should work as a team and sell the idea of Halton Hills to Acton residents since amalgamation can be a benefit to them.

Regional government helps small urban areas finance major road and service improvements.

He doesn't think Acton needs to be sold on future promises since there is ample evidence, such as the major road improvements carried



Councillor Peter Pomeroy

out there over the past 44 months, to make membership in Halton Hills attractive.

When he announced he was running for council he said one aim was to try and improve the efficiency of council.

Some thought this was a naive notion. Also he admits he's met with very little success.

Although his bid to improve council meetings has failed he isn't going to give up. He thinks council must look at its conduct and procedures since ratepayers are starting to complain.

This year's council has been maintaining a much higher profile, becoming embroiled in a number of sticky issues which have drawn large crowds to council

chambers. In addition, the number of residents coming out to regular meetings has increased dramatically so it's crucial council clean up its act or else prepares for more flak.

He has brought up the subject of council inefficiency several times but can't seem to get his ideas across to council.

He suggests a number of ways proceedings could be improved, including simply following the rules of procedure.

For instance Pomeroy would like to see councillors who object to committee decisions be required to propose an alternative and the item then sent back to committee for further consideration. He says this would make committee work.

He believes councillors, himself included, should be doing a lot more homework before meetings to cut down on the time devoted to unnecessary questions.

Pomeroy notes the rules of procedure state a councillor can speak just once on each item but this rule is flagrantly abused. Another rule frequently broken is the one requiring councillors to present written resolutions to be read by the clerk, before debate takes place. Following these two rules would save an hour a meeting he believes, allowing council to properly deal with by-laws and other important matters scheduled for the end of the agenda which he thinks are too frequently hastily brushed over.

Pomeroy agrees with fellow newcomer Peter Morris that it is just about time the entire operation of the town was reviewed, including the way meetings are conducted.

He didn't support Morris when the subject of a review was brought to council since it was obvious council wasn't prepared to follow a consultant's recommendations to the letter, including ones

which alluded to council's shortcomings.

Pomeroy rejected the review he says because if it isn't followed it would be a waste of money. He added if he wasn't so sure it would be defeated he'd put forth a motion calling for a review with the recommendations binding on council.

He says he is concerned about the manner in which planning is carried out since it is the one area of town action where mistakes must be "lived with forever". While his own attendance at planning board meetings has been fairly good he is concerned about high absenteeism among colleagues.

Pomeroy believes in the interest of new home buyers many delays in the planning process must be eliminated. He'd like to see red tape cut down, too, but doesn't know how this could be accomplished as long as so many government agencies are involved.

He suggests when a plan is brought to planning board the planning department should be expected to report back to councillors on the development right away and a decision made immediately by the politicians whether or not they want the development.

This would cut down on delays which add to the cost of homes. Pomeroy noted there are projects on the books which have been delayed "three or four years."

Pomeroy says he is also concerned about meetings which he believes have been allowed to get out of hand this year, especially when there are large delegations present. He notes he has heard many threats from meeting chairmen but seen little action directed towards restoring order.

As a Ward 3 representative he has found himself on the hot seat over the library question. Pomeroy admitted the library issue has been the toughest he has faced. He

realizes his pro library stand isn't popular with many of his constituents but feels it would be a benefit to the whole town.

He doesn't believe the present facility is adequate and doesn't think anyone will be able to get residents to support a high tax dollar expenditure without a lot of explaining.

While he voted for the new library, Pomeroy is opposed to the Cedarvale site and thinks site selection needs a lot more review. He has suggested the mayor set up a special committee involving citizens, library board and councillors in the hope of settling the issue before the Ontario Municipal Board hearing. Nothing has come of his suggestion—yet.

Since he can't see any way of changing the majority of council's opinion that the library should be in Cedarvale he is now counting on the OMB to back up council's decision and he will then request a site review.

In the event the OMB rejects the town's plan he hopes the present library is refurbished, not expanded, and a branch library opened in a closed store in the east end of town.

Pomeroy stands by his campaign stance against a municipal complex until there is evidence of a real need. He noted he has seen lots of reports saying a municipal complex is needed but no hard evidence.

Pomeroy has been active as a member of the new industrial development committee and is well known around town hall for the many hours he has put in on the Scott Paper deal.

He thinks the hiring of a regional industrial development officer is a big step towards bringing much needed industry to Halton Hills but also believes attracting industry here will be a tough job since the town has never been too active in the field and is having to learn techniques from scratch.

Pomeroy thinks Halton Hills must gain the confi-

dence of the region industrial officer so he will point industry to the town especially since both Georgetown and Acton should be viewed as prime industrial targets.

He thinks industry is a top priority if the town is to remain healthy and grow. Pomeroy says it is especially important industry be brought to the area so long-time residents will be able to remain.

Industry must be brought to town and houses built afterwards he thinks. This will be especially important for planning of municipal services since the town would then know what kind of assessment there is. With development proposals being brought forward continuously and nobody knowing when they will start yielding assessment, the town is working in the dark.

He thinks the campaign for industry is going well because the town is now being forced to gather important data which can be used in the future. Pomeroy views his role in the process as challenging.

On the subject of the councillor's pay raise early in the term he admitted he was one of the few new councillors who supported it.

He says if he is going to be expected to devote a lot of time to a job he wants to be

paid for. "I didn't feel the raise was exorbitant," he says. Other councillors make more than those in Halton Hills and the last raise was for two years. He will oppose any suggestion of a raise next year.

—This is the second of a series of articles on municipal councillors and school trustees serving their first terms.

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