

## Songs of the swan

# Twelve Halton councillors take their leave

By Rod Lamb  
History was recorded in Halton at the new regional headquarters Wednesday, Nov. 15.

The last of an era was rung down and the beginning on a new one heralded. Heard in the spanning new council chambers was the swan song of the old order, 12 of which will never return. Yet, while the parting of the ways was noted, the new order was unveiled.

A plaque commemorating the first meeting of Halton Regional Council in the green building was unveiled. Recording all of the names of the 1977-78 council, it forever marks the date in bronze.

The meeting was the first and last one for the outgoing councillors. Noting the fact was Milton Councillor Jim Kerr, who was defeated by Gus Goutowski in the municipal election Nov. 13.

It was the first and last meeting for his fellow regional colleague from Milton, Jim Watson.

Watson went down to defeat at the hands of Bill Johnson. Defeat at the polls meant Nov. 15 was the last regional function for Halton Hills Mayor Tom Hill and Councillor Garnet McKenzie.

For Mayor Mary Munro, the occasion was the last time she would represent Burlington at regional council.

David Coons who lost in his bid for her seat will also not return. He was absent from the meeting Wednesday.

Don Carter, Tom Sutherland and Ben Ciprietti will not answer the trumpet when Burlington sends its new order to the inaugural meeting. Each took their leave.

Their counterparts Gordon Reade, Arch Donaghey and Clark Eriksen from Oakville will do likewise. They, too, took their leave.

Only chairman Ric Morrow will bridge the gap between the old and the new.

Although the meeting was his last official one, he will continue in office until the new council elects its own chairman.

So it was with some emotion that the old guard saluted before marching off. Each was presented a regional ring by Morrow.

Munro was the first one to receive hers. The little box in which the ring nestled, was the only one which was gift-wrapped.

Munro was also the only one Morrow kissed. On both accounts, the reason was because she was the only woman.

The leave-taking was not without humor.

When Morrow kissed Munro, one councillor quipped he would have to kiss all others because he had set a precedent.

In return, Munro joked that Morrow's dispensing of the finger ornaments had made him "Lord of the Rings".

Looking over her term, Munro said controversy over the region's landfill location at Site F was the most memorable.

She said politics teaches that no one is indispensable and although politicians often operate alone, at regional council she liked to think they acted as a team.

She is stepping down to pursue a career in law. Hill was the second person to receive the ring.

As the second mayor who won't be returning, he was accorded the honor of being next in line.

Going back to the time when Morrow and Hill served on the same fire committee, Morrow said Hill did his best to represent his side.

At regional council, however, they both sat on the same side of the fence. Hill was defeated by Peter Pomeroy.

Morrow, who was present when Hill congratulated Pomeroy in his election quarters Monday night, Nov. 13, said when Hill left, there was an absolute silence, so outstanding was the manner in which Hill passed the torch onto his successor.

"I have a great deal of respect for him," said Morrow. Hill said the termination of his political career marked the end of 12 years of municipal responsibility.

He said he would wear the regional ring as proudly as the one from the old County of Halton.

Twelve years means 6,307,200 minutes and Hill said he enjoyed everyone of them.

"Don't be surprised if I come back," he said. Carter was the third person to receive a ring. His name was the first one of an alphabetical list of 10 councillors who were departing.

The Burlington councillor said regional government is difficult because there are 24 people trying to make a decision.

However, as a result of the last two years, regionalism is more established in Halton as the result of their deliberations.

Morrow praised Carter as a man who worked in the best interests of Halton.

Ciprietti took his farewell. Joking with Morrow about kissing Munro, he said, "It's a good thing that he didn't try to kiss me... because kissing an Italian man is a bad thing."

Although he said he had frequently disagreed with council the past two years, it was always on the issues and not the personalities.

"In a time of uncertainty," he said, it is up to the politicians to remove that uncertainty.

Politicians should not try to over-govern or over-regulate, Ciprietti said.

Donaghey who was instrumental in having Halton locate its new building in Oakville, said he will continue to be interested in the activities of regional council.

Like a number of the departing councillors, he paid tribute to the efforts of the regional staff to serve council.

He complimented Morrow saying he wondered how he withstood the strain as chairman, especially during the hectic days of the Site F controversy.

Fellow Oakville Colleague Eriksen was next in line to receive his ring and speak. "I know what it is like to retire," he said. "It's not easy."

"Already I feel the loss." A supporter of the new regional building, he described it as "beautiful and exciting."

"I hope you won't shut the public out," he said. Eriksen stressed the importance of involving the public. He said it is a priority

which should always be remembered. Site F was brought up by Morrow when he presented the regional ring to Kerr.

He recalled the long vocal disputes on the matter but had no misgivings and only regret to see him go.

Kerr said the meeting was his first and last one in the new headquarters and said thank you to the staff.

McKenzie, who was stepping down from regional council but was defeated in his bid for an area seat on the Halton Hills council, said this year marked the eighth one at the regional and county level.

He said he was disappointed when the region sold the country building in Milton but, "when I rode down to this building today, I became excited."

When he said, "Please, I consider anything north of the QEW North Halton," the remark was greeted with mirth by his fellow councillors.

Morrow paid tribute to McKenzie, saying the transformation of regional government was doubly tough in Halton Hills where the new community had nothing in common with the old names which went before it.

He complimented McKenzie on his ability to weather the storms of change and the ability to negotiate the strong adversary currents of opinion which regionalism had to overcome.

He also said McKenzie was amenable to negotiation, even if his view differed from his.

Reade is the third Oakville regional councillor who is leaving.

A graduate of the Royal Military College in Kingston, a privilege he shares with Morrow, Reade commented on the quirks and foibles of his fellow colleagues in an epilogue punctuated with humor.

If something has to be argued, he said, then at least it has to be thought out.

Sutherland, one of the four Burlington representatives whose face will not be seen next term, praised Morrow for the strong arm he exercised at Halton's helm the past two years.

His leaving the regional ship marked eight years on the sea of municipal politics, five with the region and three with the city.

"It's like anything else," he said. "It has its ups and downs."

Watson was the last to receive the regional ring. His career in politics spanned a decade.

Going back to the days of county government, he said some of the city councils and bigger municipalities referred to county council as "a gentleman's club."

One of the advantages of the county system was the opportunity to meet with fellow representatives on an informal basis.

Watson said he hoped regional councillors of the future would have the opportunity to do this, as it eased the task of getting to know one another and lessened the load of dealing with weighty matters.

Concerning the controversies which he was often at the centre, he said, "I know I've been a stubborn person."

In his conflicts with council he said he was "the first one to call Ric Morrow a fly-by-night chairman."

(Morrow is a pilot for Air Canada.)

Watson said this election was the first one he had lost. However, there are advantages of losing. There is no longer the responsibility.

He said he may open a real estate business in Milton with fellow councillor Kerr.

Watson concluded by saying, "See you all again."

Last but not least to deliver his swan song was Morrow. The meeting was the last one he will officially preside over the old council.

Looking over the two years as regional chairman which culminated a 10-year career in municipal politics, Morrow said his goal was to meet problems "head on."

Although matters were often controversial, he succeeded in convincing council to make major decisions in a short period of time.

Two were the creation of a regional business development department with its own head and the approving of the region's official plan.

Site F was probably the most controversial subject of his term and the one which caused him the most concern.

However, it was approved by council and the matter is now before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Uniform water rates were approved.

If the region is going to be continued on page 5

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