

# Acton's growth to 10,100 regional concept shows

Only 20 Acton area residents attended a meeting Tuesday aimed at surveying the public's preferences among four alternative proposals for Halton Region's first official plan.

The four concepts outlined could see Acton's population grow from its present 6,300 to anywhere from 8,200 to 10,100 by the year 2001.

Regional planning department staffers Ed Babb, Raj Mohammed and Bob White explained the concepts for those who attended the meeting at the Acton Public Library. Also on hand were town councillors Roy Booth, Les Duby, Russ Miller, George Malby and Peter Marks, Town Planner Mario Venditti and town engineer Bob Austin.

The meeting was one of a series of forums scheduled to take place across Halton. The regional planners urged the 20 citizens in attendance to complete a questionnaire so that the most popular of the four alternatives presented can be determined. The current series of public meetings represents the second phase in the development of Halton's official plan, which could be implemented before the end of the year.

Mr. Babb pointed out that his own department has yet to state its own preference among the concepts, but will do so once the opinions of the public and the planning departments of each area municipality have been tabulated. The regional planners, he said, will then prepare a draft official plan for presentation first to the public, probably in September, and finally to council for approval.

In response to Coun. Duby's concerns, Mr. Mohammed agreed that whatever official plan concept the region finally chooses, the province must have the final say. Just as the area municipalities' official plans must conform to that of the region, he said, the region's plan must conform to provincial policies.

"I can't guarantee the de-

gree to which the province will listen (to the region's concerns)," he admitted. "But there must be some form of agreement among all three tiers of government."

"Let's not pretend we're being really effectual," Coun. Duby warned. "But I agree we must let the province know what we want."

The four concepts presented last night take into consideration 13 separate aspects of living in Halton and project existing conditions to the year 2001. The concepts, contrasted against existing figures, deal chiefly with population and employment as follows:

1) TRENDS—Current trends are projected without consideration of outside controls and natural effects. Halton's current population of 228,000 would reach 325,000 by the year 2001, while that of Acton would increase from 6,300 to 10,100. Employment across the region would jump from 65,000 to 183,000 jobs and in Halton Hills from 7,900 to 14,000.

2) LOCAL-PROVINCIAL—Based on provincial policy guidelines, Halton's population would swell to 460,000 and the town's to 66,000. Employment would increase to 162,000 across the region and 19,000 in town.

3) HALTON OBJECTIVES—Regarded as the public's preferred concept according to surveys undertaken last fall, the regional population would grow to only 376,000 and Halton Hills to 53,000 while jobs would increase to 147,000 in Halton and 16,000 in the town.

4) AREA PLANNING—Based on input from the town planners in Halton's four municipalities, Halton's population increases to 412,000 and the town's to 50,000 while employment reaches 154,000 jobs in the region and 17,000 in the town.

The planners apologized for not providing complete information on the different implications which the various con-

cepts hold for Acton and Georgetown. The very fact that the oversight was pointed out by a citizen in attendance gives the planners an indication of what their draft official plan must include, Mr. Babb commented.

"Acton and Georgetown are two distinct planning areas", Coun. Booth agreed. "I hope this gentleman's question will tell the planners something." Mr. Mohammed explained that, while all of the data pertaining specifically to Acton is not yet available, the community's development is essentially an internal matter to be left in the hands of the town planner. The region is more likely to consider Halton Hills development as a whole, he said.

Acton merchant Paul Nielson, who was recently appointed to Halton Hills industrial advisory committee, added that Statistics Canada has also stated its intention to begin grouping figures from Acton and Georgetown together. He suggested that the region might make clear to the federal agency that combined data would be "useless" to both of the individual communities.

Since questionnaires were provided for the citizens to make their opinions known, few concerns were voiced during the meeting. Norm Elliott, however, asked Coun. Booth to clarify the effects of the proposed McLaughlin residential development on Georgetown's and Halton Hills sewage capacity forecasts.

The proposal, he said, could have "an extreme effect upon Acton's survival in Halton Hills."

Coun. Booth explained that the dispute which arose from the town's denial of servicing for the development is currently being fought in court. He noted, though, that the regional planners have considered the implications of the 363-acre subdivision proposed for development near Norval, which would increase Georgetown's

populations by approximately 6,500. Others in attendance pointed

figures, despite the extensive omission in all of the concepts of farm employment

consideration given to the future of agricultural land. Many farmers, today, it was pointed

out are more concerned about saving their employees than saving their land.

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