

# Region plan approved despite rural concerns

Culminating nearly five years of extensive debate and discussion, some 40 public meetings and hundreds of revisions, Halton regional council has adopted its first official plan, a comprehensive distillation of planning policies that will dictate the region's growth and development for the remainder of this century.

The long-awaited decision to accept the plan and forward it to the Ontario ministry of housing for final approval came Wednesday afternoon despite several concerns expressed by some residents and councillors.

A prediction by Norval area farmer Peter Branch that Halton Hills will pay dearly in its attempts to implement the plan, prompted Halton Hills Coun. Russ Miller to call for a recorded vote in which he opposed the motion to approve the document.

Mr. Branch and fellow farmer Rod Pinkney, Coun. Miller contended that the concerns of Halton's agricultural community have not been adequately heeded. Others who voted to defer adoption of the plan were councillors Archie Donaghey of Oakville, Jack Rafitis of Burlington and Jim Watson of Milton.

The other 18 council members in attendance, including Halton Hills' other representatives, Mayor Tom Hill and councillors Pat McKenzie, Roy Booth and Mike Armstrong, endorsed the new official plan.

In his third brief to council, Mr. Branch, a former Ontario civil servant, claimed that it

will cost Halton \$1.2 million during 1979 alone just to implement policies outlined in the chapter of the plan concerning agriculture. He further predicted that Halton taxpayers will be unwilling to finance the scheme, "especially when we farmers assure them the money will be wasted". And the farmers, he added, certainly can't afford "a bigger tax burden."

Mr. Branch contended that the new plan offers Halton farmers nothing that is not already available from and paid for by other sources. He warned that the provincial government will probably reject the plan outright as an

encroachment upon the democratic rights of citizens, and quoted agriculture minister William Newman, who in a letter to Mr. Branch, acknowledged that planning policies must be flexible.

According to the letter, Mr. Newman also admitted that provincial land "freezes" would be unnecessary, unfair to farmers and difficult to administer.

Mr. Branch recommended the deletion of the plan's agriculture section, arguing that regional council, with its absence of farmer members, will be unable to finance, administer or even direct such a private enterprise system.

"I believe farmers should run their own show through an elected body which represents all who wish to participate," he said. "They are running it on their own now quite successfully without any help from regional government."

Rod Pinkney, an RR3 Georgetown farmer, who has also addressed regional council previously to condemn proposed rural land "freezes", expressed amazement at Mr. Branch's financial prediction. He noted that implementation costs for the new plan have never been discussed at the region.

"Do you think the people can afford this?" he asked. "I don't know, but I don't think the farmers can afford it."

Mr. Pinkney speculated that two government officials could find permanent jobs investigating and correcting problems arising from the provincial government's agricultural code of practice, to which the regional plan repeatedly refers.

"The only reason for keeping a farm these days is so someday you can retire and sell it," he commented.

Coun. Miller's decision to support the farmers' alliance drew critical comments from his colleagues.

"I don't think any group in Halton has been heard as much as the farming group", planning committee chairman Pat McLaughlin of Burlington responded, citing support for the plan offered by the Halton Federation of Agriculture. "There will never be a time when we can satisfy everyone".

Burlington Mayor Mary Munro took offence at Coun. Miller's assertion that the farmers' because they are a "minority group" are not adequately represented at regional council.

Regional chairman Ric Morrow cooled the debate by commending the planning committee and staff for their patience and perseverance in producing "a document this council can be proud of".

Coun. McLaughlin similarly expressed his thanks to the committee and staff and added a special note of gratitude to Milton Mayor Don Gordon, whom he said attended every public meeting on the regional plan and was instrumental in "winning over the north" (of Halton).

Oakville Coun. Gord Reade persuaded council to make a final amendment prior to the plan's adoption by deleting a paragraph in which housing

mix figures were cited as guidelines for the development of high, medium and low-density residential accommodations.

The projections were not based on current housing needs, he explained, and as such will be of no help to regional council in its efforts to meet those needs over the next 20 years.

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## Town to close Acton access

Prompted by complaints about dirt-bike racing and other noisy activities, the Halton Hills finance and administration committee has recommended to council that an untravelled public road allowance off Elmore Drive in Acton should be fenced off.

The 66-foot wide easement, at the foot of Elizabeth Drive, had become the subject of council and committee discussions after George Van Der Eyken, 92 Elmore Dr., inquired about purchasing the property in the hopes of stopping its abuse.

The committee had initially recommended that Mr. Van Der Eyken should be approached to ascertain his interest in leasing the property, but concerns expressed by Coun. Peter Marks at last week's council meeting prompted the committee to reconsider its decision.

Coun. Marks pointed out that the vacant easement is frequently used by neighborhood hikers, skiers and cyclists as a short-cut across Elmore Drive. The private sale of the property would force such pedestrians to use the only other access route, at the end of the road, he predicted, thus causing some headaches for the homeowners living there.

It is a different breed of pedestrians that has Mr. Van Der Eyken upset, however. At Monday's committee meeting, he called the easement, as well as the vacant land to the rear of the property, a "hang-out" for motorcyclists and dune buggy racers.

Mr. Van Der Eyken claimed that his proposal to lease or buy the easement, fence it off, cut the weeds and plant a garden would put an end to the noise, mischief, littering and foul language that is annoying neighbors. Eight-year residents of Acton, the Van Der Eyken's decision this year to move the community's west end was aimed at avoiding the noise associated with urban sprawl.

Coun. Roy Booth outlined the problems involved in either leasing the property to the Van Der Eykens or else closing the road allowance and selling it publicly.

Clerk-administrator Ken Richardson informed the committee that town engineer Bob Austin is opposed to the sale of the property until the future use of the vacant land to the rear has been confirmed. Closing the road allowance would eliminate that landowner's only access, Coun. Marks agreed, thus inviting his justifiable objections to any such move by the town.

A number of solutions, aimed largely at curbing the non-licensed operation of mini-bikes and dune buggies in the area, were considered, including the posting of signs prohibiting the vehicular use of the easement.



Paul Wilkinson, R.R.3, Georgetown, gets coaching advice at the Halton Junior Plowing Match Saturday.

## Halton Juniors plowed for honors on Saturday

The Halton Junior Plowing Match was held Saturday on the farm of Don Sherwood in Burlington.

Lorne James of Hagersville was the judge for Saturday's match. He first began judging at the International Plowing Match held in Georgetown.

There were two classes in the match: two or three furrows, and four or more furrows.

In the two or three furrows class, first place went to Larry Hoard of RR2 Milton. Second and third places went to Tom Wilson and Paul Wilkinson, both of RR3 Georgetown. Also entered in the competition were Doug Donaldson, RR2 Campbellville, David Richardson, RR2 Milton, Brian Wingfield, RR3 Georgetown, and Cecil Patterson, RR4 Milton.

In the four or more furrows class, the winner was John Reid of RR6, Milton. Second and third places went to Harley Pickering of RR1, Oakville and Jamie Alexander of RR2, Oakville. Also entered in the competition were Allan Harris, 3200 Derry Road West, David Robinson, RR2, Georgetown and David Agnew, RR2 Milton.

## Graduate



Douglas Murray Wright, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stan Wright, St. Catharines (formerly of Georgetown) has received his B.A. in fine arts from the University of Toronto. Mr. Wright is presently enrolled at the University of Toronto Faculty of Education.

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