

# Uniform rates divide council

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Regional solicitor Dennis Perlin responded that the adoption of uniform rates would be entirely in order until Bill 151 can be amended. Answering a second question from Oakville Coun. McLean Anderson, he explained that there are no provisions in the Ontario Municipal Act for council to put the question of uniform rates to Halton voters. The individual area municipalities, he added, are entitled to do so in their own districts, but only if they are in a position to act on the stated wishes of voters.

Coun. Reade successfully amended the main motion so that staff will not act on the new rates policy until all pertinent information has been collected, with a target date for the receipt of such data set for Jan. 1, Burlington Coun. Tom Sutherland reported that staff should have the information ready for council's next meeting Nov. 1.

**UNENDING SERIES**  
Halton Hills Coun. Roy Booth complained that the seemingly unending series of amendments served only to delay council's action on the issue.

"I'm fed up", he declared. "We just keep going round and round the track. These amendments are just passing the buck onto the next council".

Coun. Reade explained that he simply wanted to find out if council can swim before it jumps in the water.

"I've never seen a council lose so much credibility and be so ill-prepared to deal with a policy change of this magnitude," Coun. Anderson stated when support for uniform rates visibly increased around the council table. "It would be ludicrous to change a policy

like this when there's so much information still to come. We're trying to nail jelly to the wall and hoping it will stick. We've established Jan. 1 just so we can apply for the carrot (the provincial incentive grant) that we'll never receive. We haven't approached this with more than a shred of logic".

Mayor Barrett added that council's decision to adopt uniform rates will penalize the municipality that has managed its financial affairs best. Three major industries in Oakville which supply their own processing water will be unfairly taxed by the proposed sewer surcharge, he said, since no means of accommodating such uses have been identified.

**WORST EXAMPLE**  
"This is one of the worst examples of council abrogating its mandate to the public we've seen, and after we said we're mature enough not to depend on government hand-outs".

Oakville Coun. Carl Erikson noted that the council chambers had quieted while Oakville representatives made their impassioned pleas on behalf of their constituents. The quietness was fitting for such a meeting, he said, since the adoption of uniform rates will spell the end for local government in Halton.

"If this carries," Coun. Erikson said, "Oakville is going to pay again just to support the north (of Halton). When that first water bill goes out, I wish you all luck with your telephones, because you're all going to get a lot of calls. The ratepayers are going to say 'enough is enough' and say goodbye to local government".

In the recorded vote that followed, Burlington Coun. Ben Ciprietti was the only member from outside Milton and Oakville who opposed the motion to adopt uniform rates. All other Burlington representatives sided with Halton Hills members in supporting the policy change.

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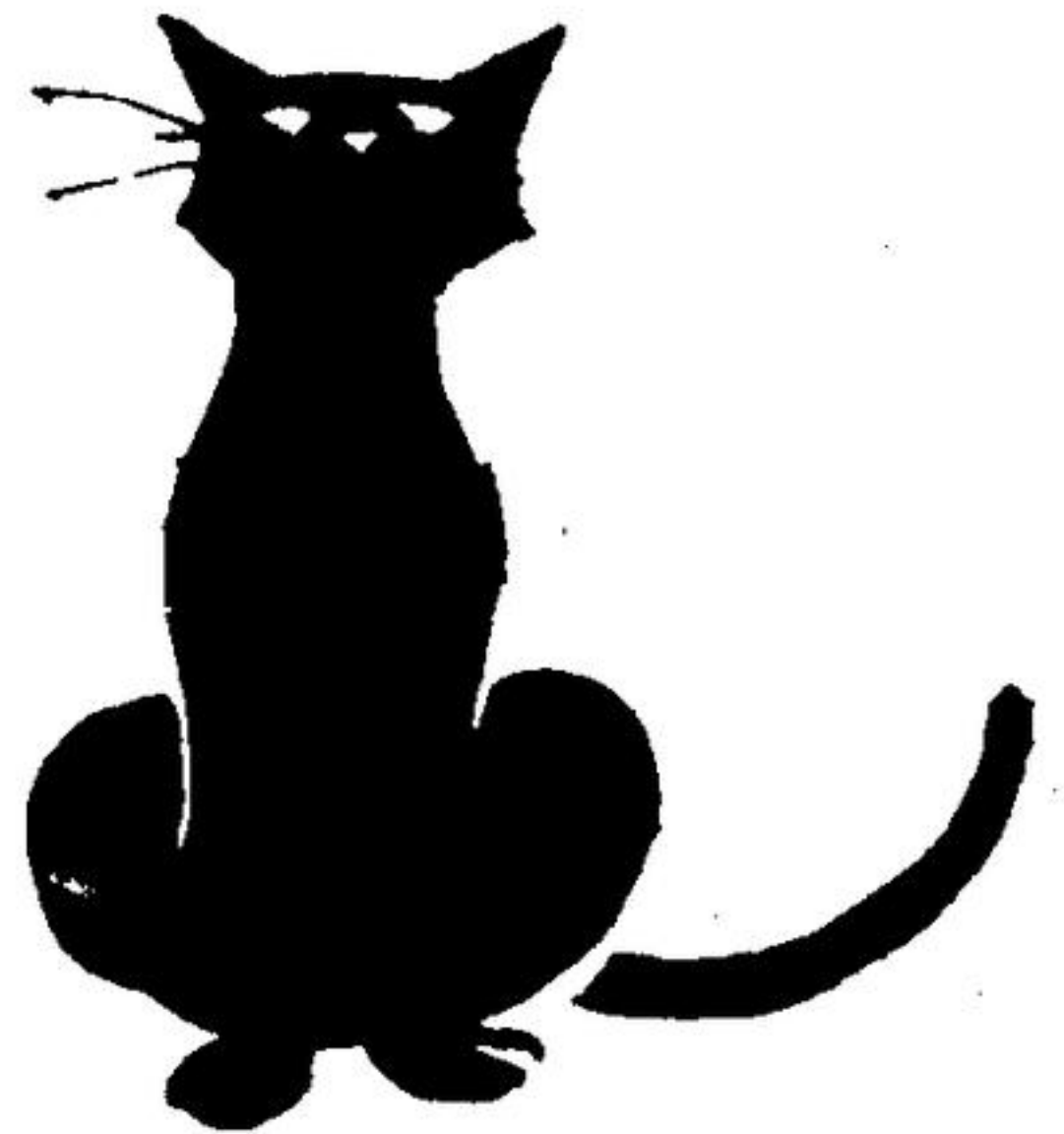
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