



LORNA MILNE

CANADIAN GLASS

Lorna Milne, wife of Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe MPP, discussed Canadian glass with collectors at the Georgetown library last week. Mrs. Milne told enthusiasts about Canadian made products and identified pieces for her audience. (Herald photo by Muggle Hannah)

Special meeting to discuss region staff

Members of Halton's health and social services committee will be attending a special meeting of the administration committee today (Wednesday) in an attempt to justify their proposal to break with a recently approved policy freezing the number of region employees at 704.

Despite council's move to curb spending by prohibiting any further hiring at the regional level, the health and social services committee has recommended that 10 more people should be hired into new positions in the health department that would be entirely funded by provincial subsidies.

Administration committee McLean Anderson of Oakville last week accused councillors of the health committee of trying to "sneak through the back door" with their recommendation to break with a policy approved less than three weeks before by council.

PROGRAM CONSIDERED

"When are they going to learn?" he angrily demanded.

A new psychologist to work on the mental health program in north Halton is among the position and programs being considered. Others involve behavioral training, day treatment, pediatrics, and co-ordinating and clerical work.

Burlington Coun. Walter Mlakewich, who chairs the

health committee, cited the 100 per cent provincial subsidies available for the proposed positions and assured council that the positions would be dropped if the amount of the subsidies were ever to decrease. He stressed the urgency of approving the positions, warning that applications for subsidies carry deadlines in some cases.

Burlington Coun. Jim Grieve told his colleagues on council that the health department's current needs and the availability of subsidies had changed his mind about the staff freeze policy. If council really wanted to reduce spending, he contended, the freeze should have been placed on the dollars involved, rather than the positions.

NEARBY HOSPITALS

Coun. Grieve pointed out that the closure of several nearby hospitals has prompted more citizens to seek medical aid through the region, increasing costs as well as demand. Halton would be foolish not to implement programs that would cost its citizens nothing, he said.

Milton Mayor Don Gordon, among others, had pointed out that Halton citizens are still funding the programs through

their provincial taxes. It all comes out of the same pockets, he noted.

Council's decision to freeze region staff complement ran into early trouble at the committee level when it was discovered that many councillors had conflicting interpretations of the new policy. The matter was brought before council again for clarification.

Some objections

Mileage plan changes

A recommendation by Halton region's administration committee that seeks to limit the amount of remuneration council members may receive for mileage expenses has been approved by council with one slight revision.

The committee had recommended that councillors should not be allowed to claim mileage for anything other than attending meetings of committees of which they are members. Along with the recommendation, council approved an amendment that will also enable councillors to claim mileage for attending meetings of the various boards and outside committees related to regional government.

ALLEGED ABUSES

Although the move was designed to cut back on alleged abuses of mileage allowances by councillors who would claim remuneration for simply dropping in briefly on committee meeting or regional staff members, Burlington Coun. Walter Mlakewich complained that it would limit his ability to serve his constituents.

"You're cutting down on my rights and privileges to represent the concerns of the electorate," he told members of the administration committee.

"The business of the committees is the business of this council, and I presume that no one around this table is abusing the system."

Committee chairman McLean Anderson of Oakville defended the recommendation as

being "the most realistic way" to handle the "problems" that have arisen.

Oakville Coun. Laurie Munnell recalled that the formation of a fourth committee of council last term to cover health and social services had the effect of unbalancing the number of councillors who were attending the various meetings. He argued that any councillors who wish to sit in on meetings of committees to which they do not belong nevertheless deserve some mileage compensation.

DESERVE COMPENSATION

Coun. Pat McLaughlin of Burlington commented that the chairman of council's four committees deserve extra compensation for expenses. He expressed doubt that any council members are "making any money out of it", regardless.

Mayor Pete Pomeroy of Halton Hills agreed that committee chairman sometimes must make extra trips to the Oakville regional headquarters to tie their committee business together and arrange agendas in consultation with department heads. The recommendation, he acknowledged, could restrict the abilities of the chairman "to do their jobs effectively."

Coun. Anderson, who maintained that "no one is being denied anything", found himself the subject of a good-natured joke when he informed council that, beginning in May, he will be commuting between his home and municipal duties in Oakville and his new business duties in Winnipeg.

Milton Coun. Bill Johnson suggested that he should apply for mileage for the trips.



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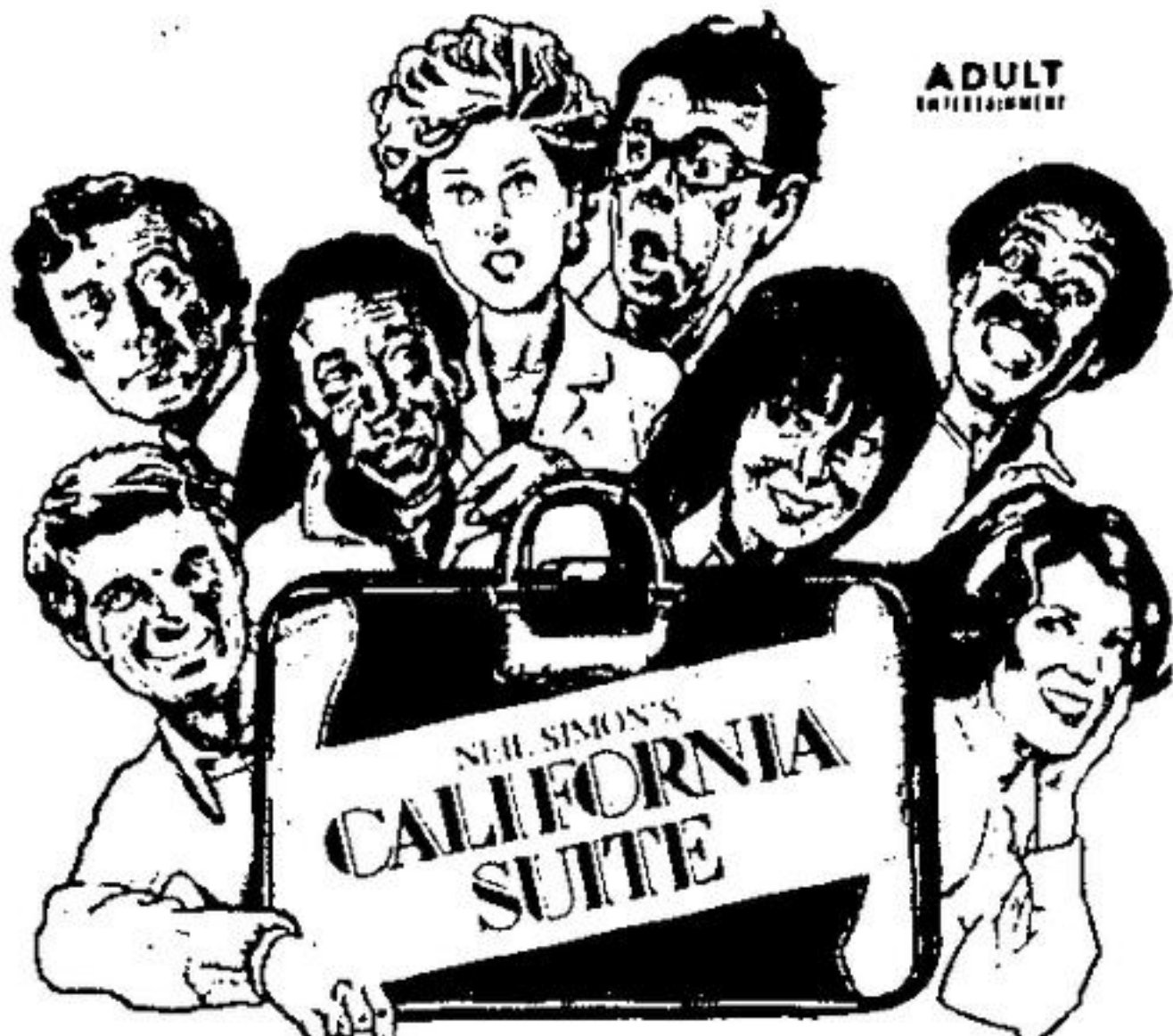
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