

Draft bill of rights for children delayed while legal aspects resolved

Provincial legislation which has been hailed at the beginning of a children's bill of rights probably won't be ready for the predicted April 1 proclamation date according to a spokesman for the Ministry of Social and Family Services.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the Halton Children's Aid Society (CAS) Monday evening Bruce Heath said that passage of Bill 114 will probably be delayed until May 1 or even June 1 because such items as how the courts are to implement the new legislation have not yet been worked out completely.

He said that the new legislation won't be "too earth-shattering" for most of the progressive CAS branches since it is merely recognizing good rules of practice which these societies have been using for the past couple of years.

SIX MONTHS

The bill will provide for independent legal representation for children when needed, he said. It will allow children over the age of 12 to institute a review of a court disposition order concerning themselves six months after the order has been made. It will provide for the licensing of adoption agencies besides CAS. It will allow the news media access to family court matters although what details are published will be carefully monitored to protect children. It also puts penalties on the books concerning professionals who fail to report cases of suspected child abuse and stipulates that the ministry must review decisions concerning Crown wards every two years.

Halton family court judge James Fuller expressed concern over the fact that 12-year-olds would have the right to direct their own lawyer under the new legislation and questioned whether a lawyer would have to take this direction whether or not he feels it is in the best interest of the child.

Halton CAS executive director Ron Coupland expressed concern over the number of extra cases of child abuse which professionals such as teachers and hospital staff members may report not because they see more abuse but because they are trying to protect themselves from prosecution for failing to report abuse.

Mr. Heath suggested that education of these people through their own ministries will take care of the problem eventually and he suspects this unnecessary reporting may have already reached its peak as these people prepare for the passage of the legislation.

Mr. Coupland also expressed the concern that licensing adoption agencies could result in agencies catering to a particular race or religion as happens in other countries.

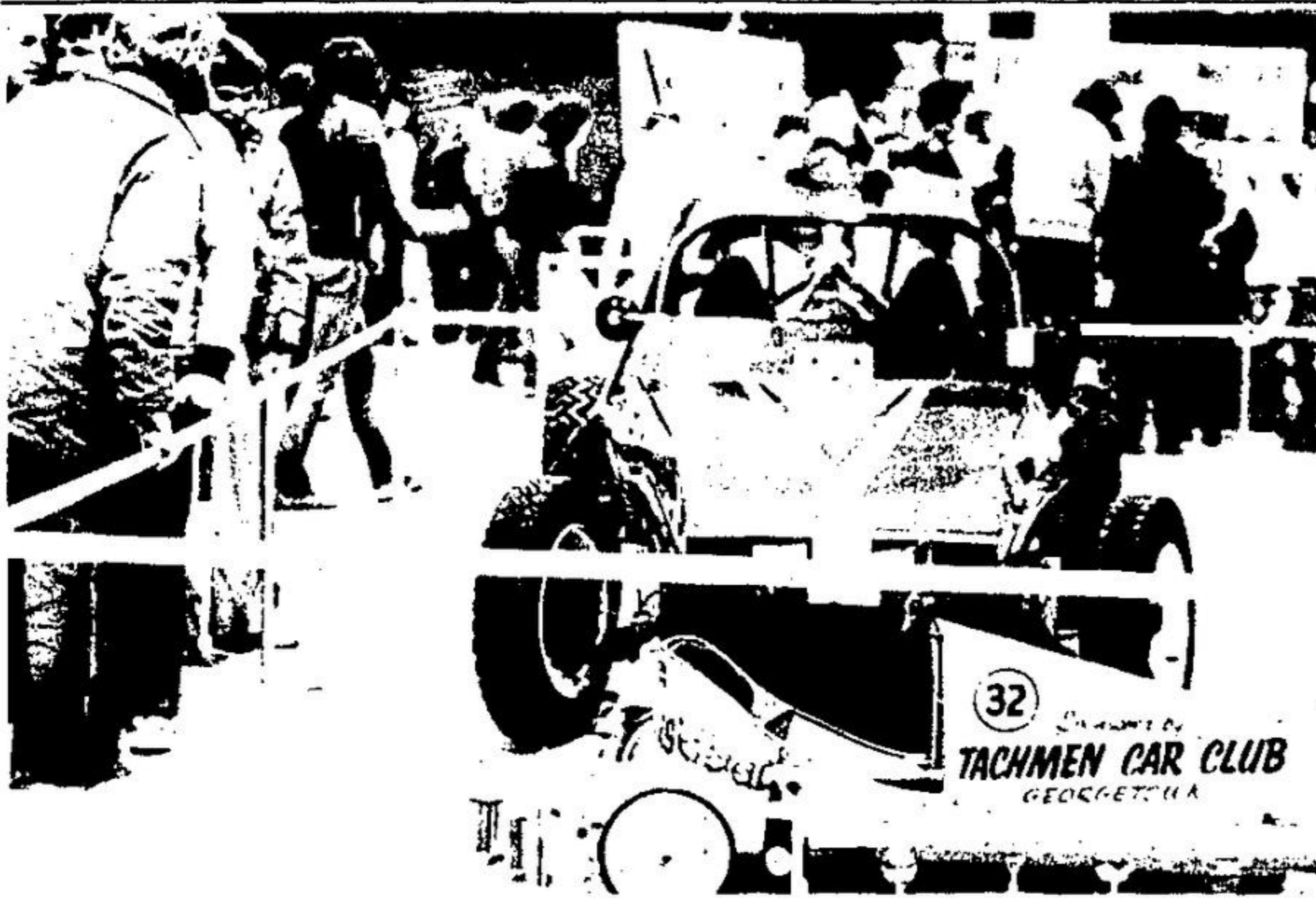
SEARCH HOMES

"We work for kids in search of homes, not homes looking for kids," he said.

Mr. Heath said he had heard others suggest that the legislation will result in two types of agencies those which cater to the wealthier section of society and CAS who will be left to handle harder to place children such as those with handicaps or those of mixed races. The ministry had to decide whether "to enshrine the rights of CAS to be the only ones to place children up for adoption", or whether to open it up to any agency which could meet the standards CAS has maintained. It was decided to open it up, he said.

In conclusion Mr. Coupland said he felt the new legislation is a long step forward in protecting children. It is the exact opposite of Roman law which allowed a father to sell his child into slavery because it makes a child a citizen of the state before he is a member of his family.

The executive for the 1979 Board of directors will be Mike Whyte of Burlington, president, John Graham of Oakville, vice-president, Leslie Corbett of Burlington, secretary, William Devries of Oakville, treasurer, and Bryan Clarke of Burlington, past president. Regional council representatives are Walter Mukewich of Burlington, Carol Gooding of Oakville, Gus Goutouk of Milton and Ed Wood of Halton Hills.



TACHMEN SPONSOR MOTION '79

The Tachmen Car Club of Georgetown had a display of its own at Motion '79, the rod and custom show held at the International Centre in Milton, but they had a lot more to worry about than just their own exhibit—the club is the group responsible for organizing the whole shebang. Club president Don McQueen said while the club doesn't have figures for the exact attendance over the three-day event, they do know that they have broken the attendance records for the International Centre. Plans are already underway for next year's show.

Inspector Stansbury said that it would be "very nice" if no situations occurred which required the use of a special weapons team, "but I'd still like to have a special squad available."

Skerrett opposes SWAT team after Burlington shooting

The former head of Halton Regional Police special weapons team is urging the formation of a tactical assault squad following the shooting of a Halton Regional Police officer in Burlington Thursday.

Chief Ken Skerrett has said he opposes the concept of a SWAT team, but he would be willing to start up the special weapons team, which was put into limbo last fall because the 13 men on the team could not train regularly and didn't have outdoor range facilities.

Inspector Al Stansbury, the head of the weapons group, and two other members, were on the scene Thursday after a sniper shot a policeman and scattered rifle and shotgun fire at an apartment building on Elgin Street.

Constable Martin Brown, 24, was hit in the forehead and left wrist. The gunman was apprehended by two unarmed detectives who grabbed hold of him after talking to him for about

fifteen minutes.

FIVE GUNS
The man had at least five guns in his possession during the incident, including a 12-gauge shotgun, and a .303 calibre rifle. He was hidden between vehicles in a parking lot, and fired a number of shots in the vicinity. Constable Brown was the third policeman answering a report of gunshots when he was shot.

Inspector Stansbury said that Halton is a section of an urban area where gun calls are becoming more frequent, and he feels a weapons team trained in tactical assault should be available to handle such calls if need be. Chief Skerrett said four men on the weapons team have recently been trained in handling negotiations.

A special weapons van, equipped with extra armaments and tear gas, was available, and on the way to the scene Thursday, but was not needed. Each district has three shotguns and several rifles which police officers can make use of in answering calls.

The special weapons teams has been called out about four times since its formation four years ago, but there has never been an assault situation in Halton, Inspector Stansbury said.

He said that although Halton police headquarters has a pistol range, the special weapons team actually needs a 300-yard range such as those used by the Department of National Defence.

Chief Skerrett has said he would take "a long look" at an assault squad before agreeing to the formation of such a unit. The situation Thursday was handled well by plainclothes officers, he said. In the event that someone barricaded himself in a house, it would be a

question of who outlasts whom.

However, a hostage situation is a totally different thing, the chief said, and it is always possible that an assault by a tactical squad could prompt the man to kill someone.

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CVCA cuts budget

The Credit Valley Conservation Authority approved a 1979 budget Thursday which was substantially smaller than last year's budget.

The total budget for 1979 of \$2,437,515 is down about 36 per cent from last year's \$3.8 million budget. The largest single category in the budget is water and related land management projects, which accounts for almost \$1.3 million of the budget.

Included in the budget are studies of the erosion problem on Armstrong Avenue, Glen Williams flooding and the paper mill dam, and Metcalfe Ravine. Construction work is also budgeted for those project in 1979.

The budgets for the various conservation areas under CVCA control is mainly for maintenance, and includes work at Terra Cotta, Limehouse and Silver Creek Conservation Areas.

Halton Hills ranks third among the municipalities along the Credit River as to population in the watershed, and equalized assessment in the watershed. According to 1977 figures, 18,016 people live in the watershed, with an equalized assessment of \$159,877. The general levy in 1979 for Halton Hills is \$27.373.

The city of Mississauga and the city of Brampton are first and second in the number of people living in the watershed in those municipalities.

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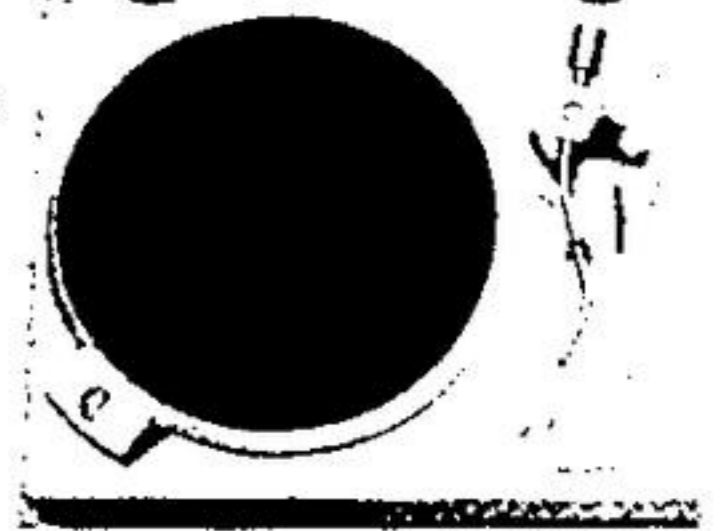
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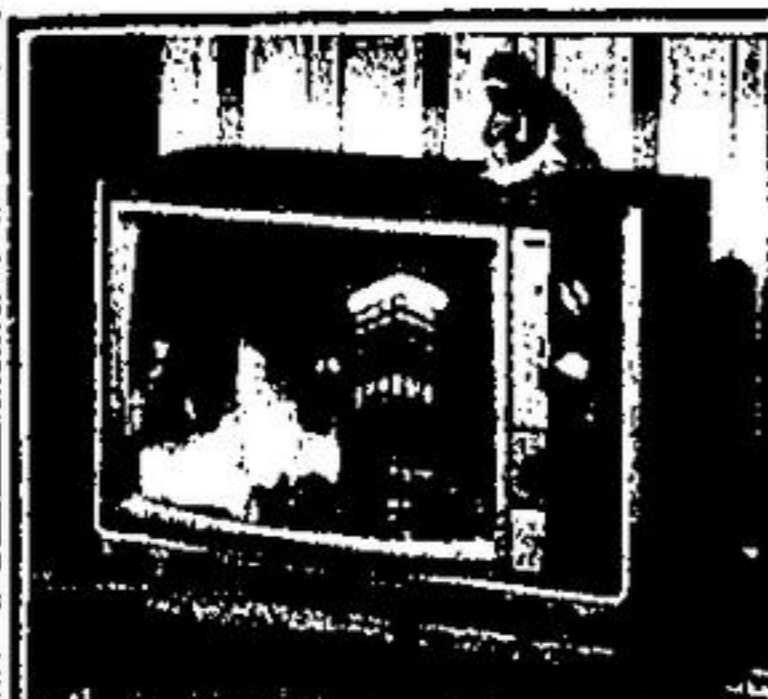
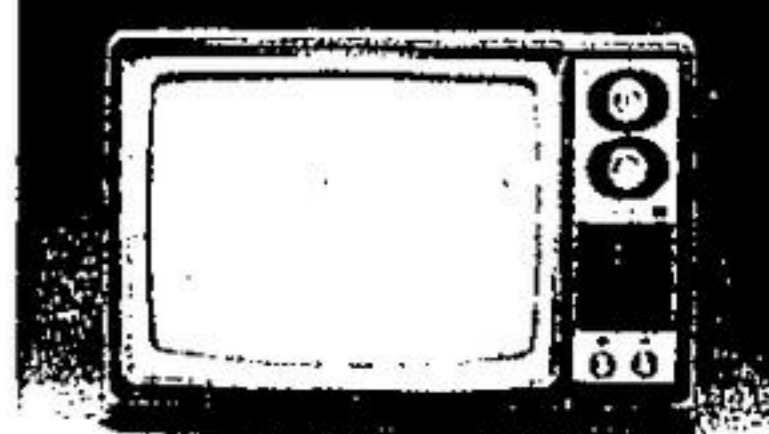
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