

Commission puts emergency telephone number on hold

By LORI TAYLOR
Herald staff writer

The Halton Regional Police Commission has placed the controversial proposal for an emergency phone number 911 system back in the hands of regional council.

The commission decided Thursday to forward a copy of the report on the proposed system, drawn up by former chief Ken Skerrett, to the region. The final approval or

disapproval of the proposal will come from the region, although if the system is approved it will be done through the Halton Regional Police communications system.

Mr. Skerrett said region will have problems incorporating the 911 system, particularly in three areas: eastern Oakville, the Aldershot area in Burlington, and Acton. Because of the area code or the phone numbers in these areas, any calls going in on 911 would not reach the central Halton switchboard, Mr. Skerrett said.

In Aldershot, the people would be connected with Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police, who would have to relay the information to Halton. In Acton, the calls would go to the 911 line in area code 519. In a small section of eastern Oakville, the calls on the 911 line would not even be answered by a phone call, but would receive a recording instead, Mr. Skerrett said.

Mr. Skerrett said those making the decision as to whether or not to implement the 911 system would need Bell Canada's engineering expertise to know what is possible with the system in Halton. He pointed out that the system crosses over into municipal rights, since all municipalities have their own fire dispatch system.

ONLY DISPATCH

Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett, chairman of the commission, said that if the system is approved, the Halton Regional Police communications system would be the core of the system because it is the only region-wide central dispatch.

"We would be the vehicle for 911 because we have a central dispatch," he said. "We were asked to look into this because we would be doing it if it goes ahead. We need to know how many men it will take and whether we'll need new equipment, or new buildings, because this will come out of our budget."

Mr. Skerrett estimated that it would take five additional employees to run the 911 switchboard. Details on how the operation would be set up

and run are sketchy because Bell Canada will not design a system for the region without a firm indication of intent to install the system, Mr. Skerrett said. Without the kind of engineering details which would be included in the design, it would be difficult to calculate what would be involved in setting up the system in Halton, he said.

ALL PROBLEMS

"This is a fear I have, that people will think 911 is a panacea for everything, and call about every little problem, for municipal works and so on," Mayor Barrett said.

Deputy-Chief Harding said Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police didn't have much of a problem when they switched over to the 911 system, but "they had to embark on an expensive, lengthy and painful process when the system was approved."

Commissioner Glen Magnusson requested an extensive

report on the effect the 911 system would have on the staff of the force, even though the

report by Mr. Skerrett is being passed on to the region. His request was approved.

Police arrest local gunman

A Georgetown man has been arrested and charged with pointing a firearm following an incident in town last week.

Halton Regional Police Inspector Harold Dowdle told The Herald Acting Sergeant Terry MacCarron and Constable Garry George were called to a home on Rexway Drive during a domestic dispute, and on arriving saw a man standing in the window with a rifle in his hand.

The officers approached the house, and at the door, they were confronted by a man they knew, who pointed the rifle at them and warned them to

leave. The officers withdrew to their cruiser to allow the man an opportunity to cool down.

Some time later, the man left his home unarmed, and police followed him to the parking lot of a business on Armstrong Avenue. They were able to talk the man into coming with them peacefully. The officers later returned to the house and seized the firearm.

Barry Bryant, 36, of Georgetown will appear in Milton Provincial Court today (Wednesday). He has been in custody since his arrest, having been denied bail.



HORSING AROUND AT THE ROYAL

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair opened last week in Toronto. This lady is just one of many people from across Canada and the United States who have horses, cattle, sheep and other livestock competing in the fair, which winds up this weekend.

Train whistles challenged

The train whistles may not be blowing in the future at four Halton Hills railways crossings.

Responding to requests from some residents who complained about the noise from the whistles, the town's general committee Monday night requested an investigation by the Canadian Transport Commission.

The residents believe that since the crossings in question had "wig-wag" signals and flashers, it was not necessary for the trains to blow their whistles when approaching.

The crossings affected are: Trafalgar Road at Lot 18; 17 Sideroad at Concession 7; 15 Sideroad; and the Fifth Line at Lot 14, Concession 5 and 6.

While the majority of committee members expressed agreement with the request, some felt the added safety factor of the whistle was necessary.

"I can't help thinking about all the reports you hear about children being killed by trains," Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson commented.

Coun. Walter Biehn mentioned he had personally been involved in a near collision at a railway crossing, but that "only the sound of the train whistle prevented an accident."

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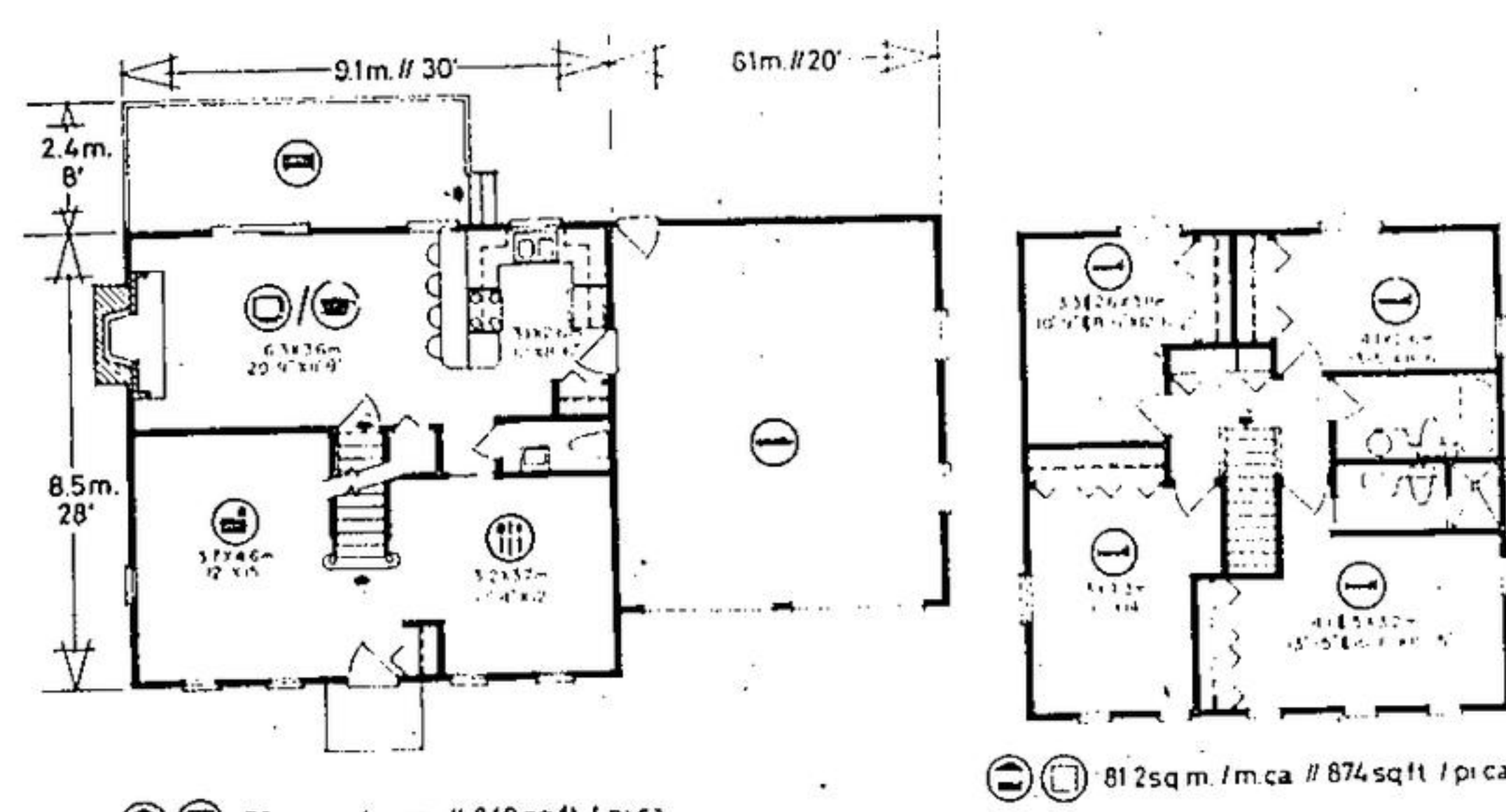
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