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The big paper with the big circulation covering Georgetown, Acton & Surrounding Communities

'Serious development pressure'

Urban studies okayed; costs a secret



GFSC's ANNIVERSARY CUPCAKE

Six year old figure skater, Maudie Beecham, wasn't even born when the Georgetown Figure Skating Club was formed 25 years ago but she thinks the cupcakes commemorating last

week's anniversary are just great anyway. Lots more in Sports Week.

(Herald photo by Mark Clairmont)

Halton Hills criticized

We're subsidizing you, Oakville 'SHOUTs' at us

By STEPHEN FROST
 Herald Staff Writer

Halton Hills consumers are bearing the brunt of an Oakville-based attack on Halton region's new water-sewer billing system.

The approximately 70 members of SHOUT (Stop Halton's Outrageous User-Tax) which formed recently in Oakville believe taxpayers throughout the region are being asked to pay for the \$3.6 million expansion to Halton Hills' sewer and water systems completed almost two years ago, according to SHOUT spokesman Gord

Reade, a former Oakville regional councillor.

Mr. Reade told The Herald Monday that asking other area municipalities in the region to pay for revamped sewage facilities in the north is a step toward "municipal socialism", the cost of which Oakville ratepayers in particular are now hard-pressed to meet.

Halton Hills regional Councillor Ed Wood, vice-chairman of a special regional committee set up to examine any apparent inequities in the new water billing system which came into effect January 1, questioned

figures cited by Mr. Reade.

"You can't look at an isolated item like that and claim you're bearing the bulk of the cost," Coun. Wood told The Herald.

Coun. Wood conceded, however, that there is some temporary imbalance among Halton's four area municipalities with the new "user-pay" billing system, designed to equalize rates across the region over a period of several years. Ultimately, he pointed out, the system will balance itself out.

SOCIAL SERVICES

"Where you lose in one area, you make up for it in another," he commented. "For instance, Halton Hills - and in particular, Acton - doesn't need nearly as much funding as do the bigger population centres for social services, but we contribute tax dollars just the same."

"Each municipality should pay for what it can afford to do and do without what it can't," Mr. Reade argued. "The present system is being used to bail out the town of Halton Hills."

Extensive and long-overdue renovations and expansions to Halton Hills' water and sewer facilities during 1977 and 1978 left the town's ratepayers, particularly those in Acton, facing massive increases in municipal taxes. Halton Hills regional councillors mustered enough allies at the region, however, to head off the larger increases by having Halton implement the new billing system.

Though confusing for many,

the new system has been praised by Halton Hills Mayor Pete Pomeroy as a blessing for taxpayers in the north. Mayor Pomeroy's Oakville counterpart, Harry Barrett, led the opposition at numerous regional meetings during 1979 in an attempt to maintain the status quo.

CHAIR'S SUPPORT

The support of former regional chairman Ric Morrow and his successor, current chairman Jack Raftis of Burlington, aided Halton Hills' cause greatly. Supporters of the equal rate system now in effect learned council's approval of the concept last summer the first real evidence of Halton's growing regional spirit.

While not involved in last summer's vote, former Oakville Coun. Reade has revived anti-equalization sentiments by challenging Coun. Wood's belief that the tables will turn, this time in Oakville's favor.

Coun. Wood claimed that Oakville's own sewage system will require upgrading during the next few years, generating costs which taxpayers across Halton will have to share.

Mr. Reade argued that Oakville's 80,000 residents provide a wide enough tax base to have covered any such future costs themselves under the old billing system. Halton Hills, he noted, started out with a deficit in its sewer and water account, while both Oakville and Burlington enjoyed surplus funds.

"Now we're being asked to pay for Georgetown's inability to make ends meet," he said.

Town council has stayed with a hotly-debated planning board recommendation constituting the first step toward determining whether the urban centres of Georgetown and Acton can grow, to what extent and in what direction.

Council approved the recommendation Monday night without comment, launching a planned study of the Georgetown urban area which had been amended the week previous to include Acton as well.

Acknowledging what Halton region planning director Raj Mohammed called "serious pressure from developers to solve the (municipal servicing) issue," the planning board recommendation was passed on to council last Tuesday night following a lengthy debate.

Speaking in support of the urban study on which his chairmanship prevented him from voting, Coun. Mike Armstrong told board members last week he was "prepared to put (his) job on the line" to back the proposal.

Board members were sharply divided on whether the study should proceed or be left individually until the ministry of environment determines how much sewage capacity exists in the town's two treatment plants.

Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson led opposition by questioning the approval of a study when there is no price tag attached to its cost.

She noted the town has already financed at least three studies on the two sewage plants' capabilities without reaching conclusions on possible population growth.

Clerk Ken Richardson said money has been budgeted to cover the study's cost but declined to reveal the figure in case it becomes a target for a tender price.

After Coun. Ross Knechtel pointed out similarities between problems existing in Acton and Georgetown, Coun. Roy Booth amended the recommendation to include studies of both centres.

Coun. Armstrong ended the discussion with an impassioned plea that councillors face up to their responsibilities and make a decision on future expansion.

Council either wanted growth for the municipality or it didn't want it, he said. The council of his father's (former Georgetown mayor Jack Armstrong's) time was very badly ridiculed for "spoiling" the small-town atmosphere when it allowed development to begin in the mid-1950s. In his opinion, he said, development

hasn't spoiled the town, it's still "a pretty town", and always will be, he said.

Coun. Harry Levy demanded to know why regional council had "turned weak" after designating the area south of Georgetown bounded by the eighth and ninth lines and 10 sideroad as rural then turning around the deferring any designation on that area.

He was told that contrary to what he thought, the deferral by the region stemmed from a request by Halton Hills council.

Mr. Mohammed told members that strong pressure from developers would force the municipality to take action.

If council didn't spend money on the study to prove whether treatment capacity exists in the plants beyond what studies have shown, then it could spend fees for lawyers defending their inaction in front of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), he said.

If growth capacity is found in the treatment plant further studies would be done to determine in what direction the urban centres should extend their boundary. Mr. Mohammed said, if no capacity is found the town and region will be heading to the OMB to say so.

Council either wants growth for the municipality or doesn't, Coun. Mike Armstrong said. A council headed by his father, a former mayor of Georgetown, was ridiculed for "spoiling" the small town atmosphere when it allowed development to begin in the mid-50s.

Council might choose to bicker over the cost of the study and toss out angry estimates that it would be \$100,000 but members shouldn't forget that they faced 270 times that amount in Focal Properties' law suit.

The study will determine what is the servicing capacity of the sewage treatment plants, what is the preferred size for the urban centres and what urban boundaries should be for each centre.

The recommendation also specifies component members for a 10-man steering committee to direct the study, provides a mechanism for getting tenders from consultants' detailing study approach, to be performed and cost estimates and finally requires the committee to recommend a consultant to perform the study.

Coun. Booth suggested that costs of the study might be recouped from developers who are allowed to build if growth is eventually permitted. They would be asked to pay a surcharge on top of existing levies, he said, since this is the method used in other areas.



90 YEARS YOUNG

Georgetown's Evelyn Walker celebrated her 90th birthday last Tuesday in grand style with special greetings from the mayor, conveyed by Coun. Walter Biehn, and the knowing congratulations of two of her Kincourt neighbors, Emily Bessey and Jessie Williamson, both of whom will also turn 90 this year. Additional photo and story inside.

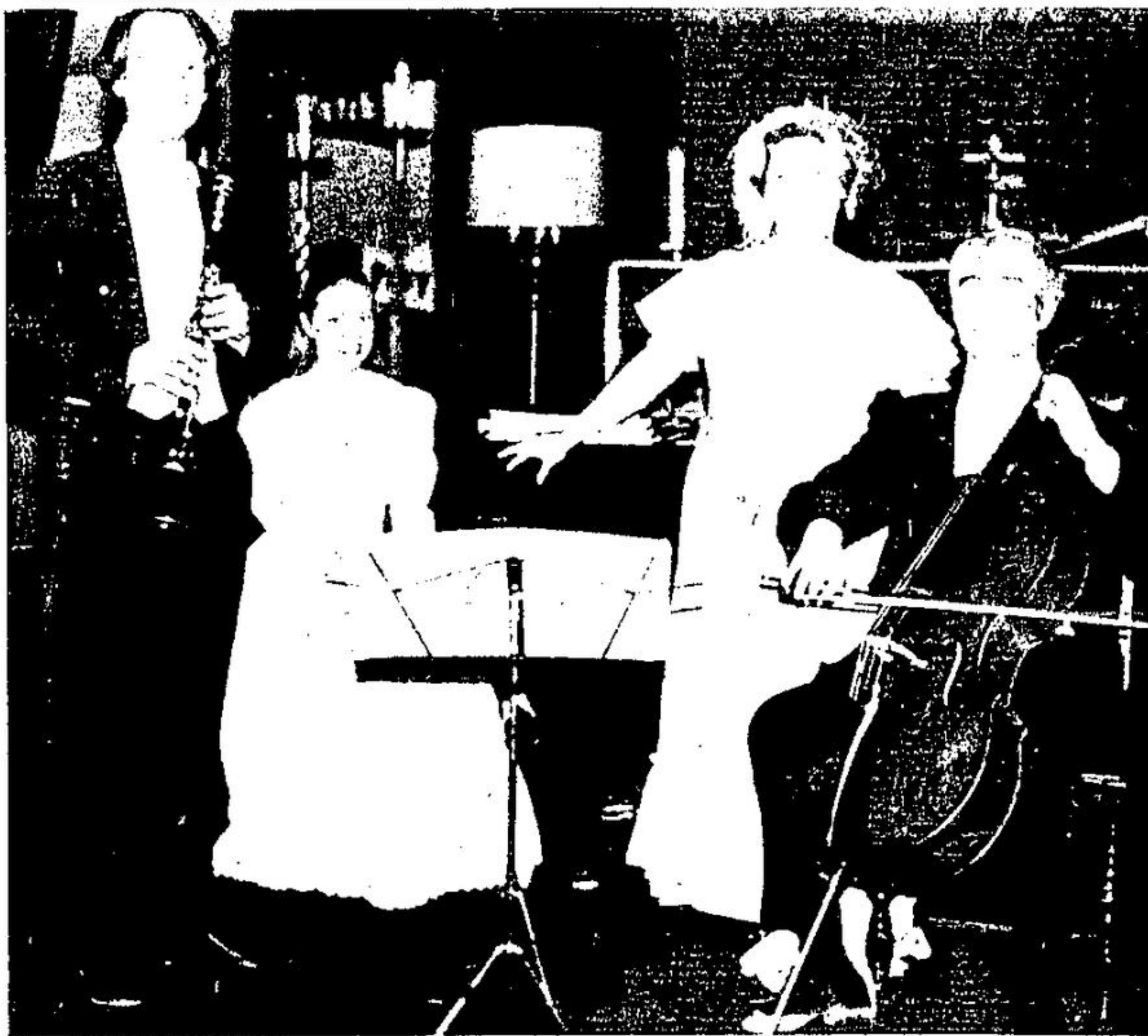
(Photo by George Evashuk)

POT EVIDENCE BELIEVED STOLEN

Unofficial reports indicate that an estimated \$35,000 worth of marijuana being held as evidence in a court case was stolen during a break-in at the Milton courthouse Monday night.

Spokesmen for Halton Regional Police, the sheriff's office and the courthouse staff declined to make any comments on the rumor.

However, Noel Bates, who was brought in from outside Halton to act as prosecutor in a drug case, asked for the declaration of a mistrial yesterday morning at the start of the second day of the trial. This is thought to be related with the alleged theft of the marijuana.



CAPTIVATING CAMERATA

Cammerata again entertained local residents with their unique performing style in a concert at Holy Cross Church last Wednesday. The concert, sponsored by the Halton Hills Arts Council, was a heritage concert, designed to be played in restored

19th century buildings around Ontario. The evening featured songs and recitations such as would have been heard in performances 100 years ago in the old town hall, or in the parlors of large private homes.

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