

Region remains intact-so far

Sewer rate debate awaits further study



By CHRIS AAGAARD
 Herald Staff Writer

A secret "trump card" played by Halton Hills councillors during a four-hour debate at regional council last Wednesday has derailed a Burlington attempt to scuttle Halton's sewer surcharge system.

Although not everyone was persuaded, a threat of possible legal action from Halton Hills turned the vote in the town's favor. Brandishing a letter from the town's solicitors, Mayor Pete Pomeroy warned that Halton Hills could take the region to court for failing to uphold its mandate should the current sewer system be abandoned.

In a 12-11 squeaker vote, councillors approved a Halton Hills motion to defer any decision on the proposed termination of a sewer surcharge system by which sewer and water service costs are shared equally among Halton ratepayers.

The resolution headed off an earlier motion by Burlington Coun. Joan Allingham calling on the region to scrap the surcharge system in favor of the old "chargeback" structure of collecting sewer and water revenue.

Burlington councillors argued that under the present system, their residents will have to pay \$83 per household, compared to \$59 if the region reverted to the chargeback system. Municipalities would be responsible for collecting their own sewage and water revenues under the chargeback scheme.

However, a \$15,000 Pricewaterhouse sewer rates study commissioned by the region in June and completed earlier this month reports that the chargeback system would force Halton Hills to foot the entire bill for its \$5 million sewage treatment plant. Chargeback billing could boost the per household contribution for sewer and water charges

from its current \$80 to \$183 in Georgetown and \$158 in Acton. Following a presentation of the report by Price-Waterhouse's Bill Matthews which strongly favored retaining the sewer surcharge system with modifications, council waded into a lengthy discussion of the two-page Halton Hills motion aimed at buying time for further study of the sewer rate issue.

The resolution sought more municipal staff response to the Price-Waterhouse study and more information on how the nine recommendations listed in the study, for improving the present system could be implemented to alleviate Burlington's dissatisfaction at having to pay the higher rates.

Coun. Allingham, who had originally moved to revert to the chargeback system and pay Halton Hills \$684,000 in unexpended special assistance grants from the province, blamed Queen's Park for the sewer rate debacle in the first place.

"Again, it's a question of the province coping out on the sewers," she said. "We've been hung out to dry."

Her attempt to persuade council to "stand up and make a decision" and turn down the deferral resolution from Halton Hills received solid support from the rest of the nine-member Burlington contingent, as well as from Oakville councillors Laurie Mannell and Ron Planche.

Coun. Planche said he realizes Halton Hills residents would "get it in the neck", but called the surcharge system "lousy", saying it is forcing middle-income Oakville residents to support wealthier ones.

Calling for "a system that's fair and honest, that we can live with", Burlington Coun. David Lacombe criticized the Price-Waterhouse review for not "addressing the basic problems", adding that implementing the chargeback system would do so.

Among the nine recommendations to improve the surcharge system, the study suggests shifting a greater share of the sewer and water costs to commercial and industrial development, simplifying the billing and collection structure, charging the administrative costs of running the sewer and water system to the mill rate (about \$500,000) and carefully examining capital expenditures for sewage and water service in the future.

Oakville councillors Terry Mannell and Carol Gooding chided some council members for attacking the study when

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PINEWOOD PLANES MEET POTENTIAL PILOTS

Ron Stevens, a Ninth Line Georgetown resident, says he was encouraged to build wooden toys by his son, who felt that Dad could produce better-quality items than those bought in a store. Ron was one of the exhibitors at the 28th annual arts

and crafts exhibition and sale Saturday at the North Halton Golf and Country Club, showing off his nail-less pine creations.

(Herald photo)

WOMEN'S HOSTEL OPENS

Peggy Balkind, chairman of the board of directors of Halton Women's Place, and Halton Hills Mayor Pete Pomeroy cut the cake to celebrate the official opening of the hostel for abused wives and their children Thursday. The hostel was to receive its first guests Monday. For more details on the opening ceremony and the work involved in getting the hostel off the ground, see story inside.

(Herald photo)

Morrow warns region of divisive policies

Georgetown resident and former regional chairman Ric Morrow warned Halton councillors last Wednesday that the region must act with a "cohesive voice" if it is to survive in the future.

Speaking to council prior to a four-hour debate on the proposal to scrap Halton's sewer surcharge system, Mr. Morrow said that the region should "avoid policies that would tend to divide us."

Making his second appearance before regional council concerning the sewer surcharge and equalized water rate scheme which he helped implement in 1978, Mr. Morrow noted that the equalized system is helping to pay for Halton Hills' \$5 million sewage treatment plant by taking advantage of the broader tax base provided by regional government.

Burlington councillors and some Oakville representatives are unhappy with the

present surcharge system because residents in the south pay slightly more for sewer and water service than do homeowners in north Halton. Backing a motion drafted by Burlington Coun. Joan Allingham, the councillors had hoped to revert back to the chargeback rate structure by which each municipality would collect its own sewer and water charges. The switch would mean a substantial hike in Halton Hills' mill rate, residents here suddenly having to pay for the treatment plant without south Halton's help.

Mr. Morrow said that if the chargeback system returns, "it could reverse the momentum which brought us together and sow the seeds which could divide us."

He said that dumping the surcharge system might cause different municipalities to question their share in other regional services.

"Should other areas credit because another municipality pays less than they do for service?" he asked, adding that councillors should also consider the staff increases needed in the region's area municipalities if it reverts to the chargeback rate structure.

During an interview with The Herald two weeks ago, Mr. Morrow called plans to scuttle the sewer surcharge system "short-sighted, parochial and lacking in any depth of what regional government is all about."

He compared setting different rates in Halton for sewer and water service like setting different income tax rates across Canada.

Council deferred any decision on the sewer surcharge system until staff from the region's municipalities have responded to a \$15,000 Pricewaterhouse Ltd. rate study on the matter.

ELECTION CENTRAL

THE CANDIDATES IN PHOTOS-PAGE A2

Dave Whiting of Acton is throwing his hat in the political ring for the third time, this time for the position of regional councillor in Ward 1 (Acton), currently held by Ed Wood.

Mr. Whiting ran unsuccessfully in 1974 and again in the by-election in 1979 as local councillor in Ward 1.

Mr. Whiting was with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for ten years. After he left the force, he began

selling real estate. He is now on a leave of absence from Fobert Real Estate pending the outcome of the election. If he wins, Mr. Whiting intends to leave the firm.

"I intend to make it a full-time job," he said.

Mr. Whiting said he has several concerns about regional government.

"I would like to see the (recently discovered \$700,000) deficit explained

better," Mr. Whiting said. "I don't have the inside information on that because I haven't been there. I'm in the process of gathering information. I don't have any answers, I just have questions."

"I'm not an opponent of regional government—it just needs tightening up a little," Mr. Whiting said. "We need a strong active voice there. We have to make it work."

Salesman wants answers on deficit

TWO NEW WARD 3 CONTENDERS - PAGE A2

Ward 2 must voice its concerns --candidate

TWO-WAY RACE FOR SEPARATE SCHOOL SEAT - PAGE A8

"I'd like to see a more definite policy and program to enhance the agriculture section of Ward 2," Peter Branch said Monday night after announcing he would compete against incumbent

Russ Miller and Dolly Moulden for the Esqueving regional seat in the November 10 municipal elections.

He said that the regional government system is not working as it should in Halton because of a lack of understanding of the problems between northern and southern communities. Mr.

Branch said that the elected officials sitting on Halton Council "should make it work or get rid of it."

Mr. Branch, a Norval sheep and goat farmer and former civil servant with the Ontario treasury department, said that municipal planners need to "update the local government approach" to town planning, adding that concepts which were good ten years ago aren't necessarily valid anymore.

Esqueving have not been satisfied with their representation," he said. "The wishes of the rural community have been ignored by the present council and I feel stronger representation is needed to voice the concerns of the people."

"I think the taxes are what got me," he continued. "Taxes here are comparable to what I paid in Mississauga, but the level of service isn't even close. I'm not saying the people of Esqueving want more

services, but the taxes should reflect the services we get."

Mr. McLellan said he is also concerned about protecting the rural identity of the ward from the onslaught of development such as has been faced in the Brampton area. Sensible long-term planning is necessary to achieve that objective, Mr. McLellan said.

"What I believe is that people must have a stronger voice in what happens in their community," he said.

Farmer seeks rural-urban compatibility

Major improvements in Halton force--chief

By CHRIS AAGAARD
 Herald Staff Writer

A number of internal problems that had plagued Halton regional police since the force's creation in 1974 have been cleared up, according to a report presented to regional council last week, but there's more work to be done yet.

"It's been an eventful period," Police Chief James Harding told council, referring to a year-long study of internal troubles. "Much has been achieved, but there's still a long way to go."

Improvements have been made in a number of areas, Chief Harding said, and steps are being taken to offset a manpower shortage, a problem common to most Ontario police forces.

Chief Harding, who was joined at the meeting by deputy chief Bob Middaugh, executive officer to the chief of police John Barratt and Halton

Police Commission member Glenn Magnuson, reported that during 1979 to 1980 the department continued to fulfill

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HOCKEY, RUNNERS TOP SPORTSWEEK

Georgetown's top hockey teams, the Intermediate Raiders and junior Gemsis, had themselves quite a weekend, racking up two victories between them (including the Georgetown Chrysler Raiders' 13-4 rout of Midland), but it was the youngsters of Centennial, George Kennedy and Stewarttown public schools who came up Kings of the Hill when the dust had settled. The three schools sent cross-country runners out against unfamiliar competition at the Dundas Track and Field Club's annual meet and our kids ended up dominating the day. See Sportsweek for more details on all three teams.



GDHS GRADUATION AWARD WINNERS

Local historian and heraldic Dorothy Stone rings Georgetown District High School's 100-year-old bell to summon the 1980 graduates to the school's annual commencement exercises Saturday. Miss Stone presented the bell, which once sent students on their way to and from their

classes, to the school during the graduation exercises. Staff and students alike praised the school's strides in sports and its high calibre of instruction and academic recognition in the province. The students shown above are the award winners in sports and academics. See page A2.