

Longer terms help new members - mayor

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

Members of town council who travelled to Toronto last week for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference are generally pleased with the results, Mayor Pete Pomeroy said Friday.

"I haven't had a chance to poll all of them about the different sessions they went to, but they seem to be happy with the way things turned out," he told The Herald.

Councillors Russ Miller, Terry Grubbe, Mike Armstrong and Marilyn Serjeantson joined Mayor Pomeroy at the conference, which featured several announcements from the provincial housing and municipal affairs minister Claude Bennett last Monday, among them a proposal to extend councils' two-year term to three years.

Mr. Bennett also discussed a special task force to study the province's property tax assessment problems and the possibility of popularly electing regional chairmen in the future.

Although he acknowledged that lengthening council terms would personally make much difference to him, Mayor Pomeroy said the idea offers some distinct advantages to new councillors.

"It takes time for a new member of council to settle in," he said. "There is a time lag—a learning period to go through."

The extra year, he added, would allow new councillors to become more productive, having already gone through the time-consuming process of "learning the ropes."

THREE YEARS

A three-year term would also allow councils to make financial commitments over a longer period. Under the present regulations in the province's Municipal Act, councils can only commit funds to projects planned for their current two-year term.

During an election year, they are not allowed to promise money to projects which will begin under the new council. However, many municipalities have long-range planning (five-year budget forecasts) which provide tentative outlines of where money should be spent.

"I think three-year financial planning (actually committing funds over that period) is better for us and better for the people," Mayor Pomeroy said.

During a press conference, Mr. Bennett announced the formation of a special task force to study problems associated with establishing a provincial standard for property assessment and a new funding formula for municipalities.

The problems surrounding property taxes and assessment and the reasons why some towns are accepting equalized assessment and others, like Halton Hills, have rejected it, is extremely complex, Mayor Pomeroy said. He stressed that it is definitely a provincial issue and not one that should be settled by municipalities.

"It's the most complicated thing we are involved with," he said, "and it has to be settled by the bureaucracy rather than the politicians."

Councillors don't have the time to learn all that's needed to know about the Assessment Act to deal with it adequately, Mayor Pomeroy said.

IRON OUT

While Section 56-a recent amendment to the provincial Act, attempts to iron out inequities in tax assessment even among neighborhoods—looks good to some, the mayor said that closer study reveals other complications, ones which spurred council reject it in Halton Hills earlier this year.

Before it could ever be accepted here, he said, it would have to go through some type of hearing process in which its unfair sections are removed.

Having the Section wouldn't necessarily bring property taxes down, but it tries to balance disparities in assessment among old and new neighborhoods. When the legislation was rejected by council, a majority of members expressed concern that property taxes in Halton Hills' older areas where homes are largely owned by older financially established residents—might rise dramatically, forcing senior citizens into a financial crisis.

Mr. Bennett indicated that he would look into the proposal, but Mayor Pomeroy expressed doubt it will ever be seriously considered as part of the municipal election process.

"There's always the danger of chairmen becoming too powerful," he said, and their election campaigns could be linked to political parties, making the position locally and provincially influential.

Under the current system, the chairman is elected by his fellow councillors.

About the minister's concerns that some local councils, especially smaller township and village administrations, are holding too many closed meetings, barring the press and the public from attending, Mayor Pomeroy maintained that there are times when closed sessions are held for the public's benefit.

For example, local council often convenes "in camera" or closed sessions following its regular meetings to discuss properly matters. General knowledge of proposed purchase bids on a specific site could increase the competition and the price as well.

In camera sessions are held when councillors have to discuss issues concerning town employees.

"You just can't talk about someone's job in public," Mayor Pomeroy said.

CIVIL SERVANTS

The mayor concurred with Mr. Bennett's statements which cautioned municipal civil servants from making public statements regarding town policy.

No one else should make statements to the media or the public regarding issues discussed in council except the head of council, Mayor Pomeroy said, adding that he disagreed with the way Halton region often dispatches press releases through the chief administrator's office or another department head.

Nothing during the conference encouraged the mayor to change his views on the possibility of electing regional chairmen through a popular vote. He adamantly opposed the idea when it was brought up at a recent regional council meeting, saying that south Halton's larger voting base would sufficiently prevent a northerner from sitting in the chairman's seat.

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THAT'S INCREDIBLE!

How does he do it? Was a question echoed by spectators many times as magician Captain Bill James and his able assistants dazzled the audience of children at a special performance in Cedarvale Park auditorium Thursday afternoon.

Captain James kept his audience of young and old breathless for 45 minutes as he wielded his wand and, with the help of eager audience members, performed his feats of magic. Faithful props of every magician, the rabbit and dove, also put in surprise appearances to the delight of the crowd.

(Herald photo)

Arson at school?

Halton regional police are investigating a case of suspected arson at George Kennedy Public School last Wednesday morning. A resident noticed flames coming from the window of the principal's office on the east side of the school. Halton Hills firefighters were called to the scene shortly after midnight to put out the fire, which started among the curtains. Police are investigating the role of several young individuals suspected of starting the fire, which caused an estimated \$400 damage.

ARF says most educators understand problems

Drug program praised

By ANSTRA PAPE
Herald Staff Writer

The Halton Board of Education received a pat on the back Thursday night for its participation in a drug and alcohol abuse program from Richard O'Brien, community consultant of the Halton region Addiction Research Foundation.

Mr. O'Brien submitted a report to the board that outlined the results of a series of alcohol and drug education tests completed by secondary school teachers, vice-principals, physical and health education teachers and elementary school principals in Halton region last year.

The aim of the program was to increase the participants' knowledge of street drugs and their effects on users, to improve their confidence in dealing with the users of drugs and to make the participants aware of their own attitudes toward drug users and to correct any false attitudes they may have.

Mr. O'Brien reported that of the approximately 200 participants, a "good many" demonstrated an increase in basic drug and alcohol knowledge, a substantial increase in self-assurance and a more positive attitude toward dealing effectively with drug and alcohol-related problems.

Mr. O'Brien said he is pleased at how the Halton board has developed a system dealing with drug and alcohol problems in the schools, calling it "the most advanced board in the province of Ontario in taking a stand regarding these issues."

He added that he and the Addiction Research Foundation staff were impressed with the co-operation, assistance and support they received from the board in conducting the tests.

When questioned by trustees as to how many students benefitted from the teachers' new found knowledge, Mr. O'Brien said that almost 80 per cent of the students—those dealing directly with test participants—will be affected by the new insight the teachers have.

He added that, to date, the program has been well-received by teachers and students.

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CRTC okays Halton Cable rate increase

From The Ottawa Bureau of The Herald

Halton Cable Systems Ltd. has been allowed to increase monthly subscriber fees by \$1.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) last week gave Halton Cable permission to raise subscribers

fees to \$8 a month from \$7.

The increase affects Halton Cable subscribers in Georgetown, Acton, Milton and surrounding areas.

Halton Cable applied for the increase at a public hearing of the CRTC in Toronto March 10.

In its decision allowing the increase, the CRTC said it is justified on economic grounds.

Business plan boosts costs?

Continued from page A1

officer will enable his department to have one employee assisting established industries and another concentrating on attracting new industries to the region.

"Halton has just as much to offer as anywhere else in the Metropolitan Toronto shadow," Mr. Fischer said. "We have to be bold if we are going to be serious about this."

department will focus on provincial and national businesses, he said, but did not rule out the possibility of eventually approaching foreign investors.

The region should be prepared to "move into" a quality business development campaign, regional chief administrative officer Dennis Perlin said.

"You can't get quality unless you pay for it."

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Burglars hit four stores

Four area businesses were broken into over the weekend.

McKenzie But-All on James Street was broken into late Friday night or early Saturday morning. Access was gained by climbing over a fence and breaking down the door. A padlock was broken on a door inside the building, but nothing was taken. Total damage was estimated at \$20.

Central Taxi on Mill Street reported a break-in between 3 and 6 Saturday morning. Thieves gained access by forcing a small window above the door, causing an estimated \$20 damage and stole a small pocket calculator valued at \$5.

Silver's Department Store on Main Street was broken into at approximately 9:45 Saturday night. A resident heard glass breaking and witnessed a suspect running north up Main Street. Halton regional police reported that \$300 damage was done to the front window and \$92 in clothing was taken.

The Country Fair Market at the corner of Trafalgar Road and Steeles Avenue was broken into late Saturday night or early Sunday morning. Thieves gained entry by breaking down a temporary wall and took 24 chocolate bars and six cartons of cigarettes valued at \$60.

A Margaret Street residence in Georgetown was broken into late Saturday night as thieves made off with two cases of soft drinks and three cases of beer valued at \$40. Entry to the house was gained through an unlocked breezeway door.

A store system valued at \$1,300 was stolen Monday from a RR 2 Georgetown residence. Occupants reported the theft of a Sony receiver, turntable and two speakers from their home while they were out during the day. Access to the house was gained through a rear door.

Approximately \$30 in small bills was taken from a RR 1 Georgetown home while the occupants were on vacation. Thieves gained access to the house by forcing an insecure basement window and stole the money which was located in various parts of the house.

Watch for the warning signs of arthritis. They include: pain or stiffness lasting more than two hours after arising, pain or tenderness in one or more joints, swelling in one or more joints and a recurrence of any of these symptoms. The only effective way of dealing with arthritis is to see your doctor as soon as possible since early diagnosis and treatment can prevent disability in four out of five cases.

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