Halton Hills decision 'strictly on land use'

Proponents of new recreation centre southwest of Speyside swallowed their second defeat in less than a week Thursday as the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) sided Halton Hills and Milton and refused to grant the proposal a development permit.

The decision will likely mean that the centre's developers, a non-profit organization called the international Peace Camp Ltd., and the NEC will face each other before a tribunal of development control officers appointed by the province's ministry of housing.

Three days before the NEC met, Halton Hills council also rejected the Peace Camp's plans, and in a resolution similar to one filed by Milton council in June, urged the Commission to deny a development permit.

Peace Camp officials scaled down an earlier proposal which would have accommodated as many as 2,000 people at any one time.

The Commission dealt with a 750-people recreation centre plan which includes sports fields, camping facilities, swimming spots, a demonstration farm and a 2,422-square foot "cen-

Father Cunha told the Commission that members of the Peace Camp come from a variety of ethnic back-

grounds, and the centre would be used as a retreat where people can "have peace of mind and enjoy the fresh air."

PREJUDICE CHARGED

Commissioner Dave Whiting, representing Halton region, took exception to fellow NEC rep Leo Bruzzese's remarks that "there could be some prejudice" in the decisions against the centre reached by Milton and Halton Hills town councils.

Mr. Whiting, a Halton Hills councillor, maintained that Halton Hills' position was based strictly on land use concerns.

The Peace Camp's plans, he said, are not compatible with the farm or rural area.

By collecting memberships, the Peace Camp, Mr. Whiting said, is not only a recreational centre, but a commercial venture.

Security and supervision of the property appears to be the greatest concern of neighboring residents and municipal councils,

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NEC chairman ivor Mc-Mullin said. Although they didn't have a permit from the NEC, Peace Camp workers have cleared land, prepared campsites and graded a road on the property.

SABOTAGE

Father Cunha said someone would live at the centre permanently.

When asked about brush fires on the Peace Camp property earlier this year which brought out firefighters from Milton and Halton Hills, Father Cunha sald his group wasn't to blame.

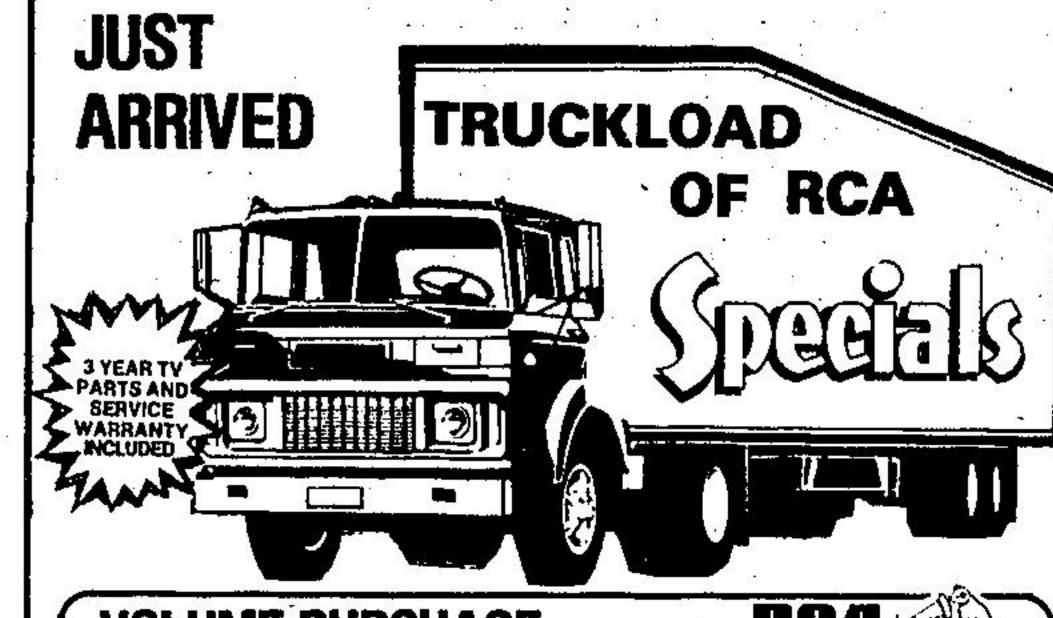
Peace Camp crews clearing land weren't near the fires and one Peace Camp representative told reporters the blaze was "sabotage", but declined to say by whom.

Peace Camp officials estimate that as much as \$20,000 in miscellaneous damage has been done to the Peace Camp property by vandals since work began this year to clean up the land.

The property is the site of a partially developed, but abandoned recreation centre from the 1960s, before the Escarpment was defined as a special planning area in 1973.

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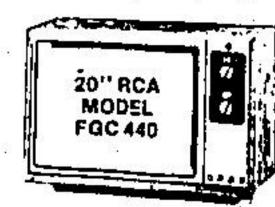


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