

Transportation for disabled

Pegasus used extensively in Halton Hills

Halton Hills residents using the Region's Pegasus transportation service will be able to prebook a seat on the van from now on, Halton Regional council decided last Wednesday.

Pegasus is a service provided for the disabled. The van transports people between Halton's four municipalities.

The new booking system should benefit users in Georgetown and Acton because

in the Region, they along with Oakville residents, use the service the most frequently, according to a Regional staff report. Halton Hills and Oakville residents each had 77 people registered with the service last year. And total Pegasus registration in 1989 increased by 24 per cent. Most of the new users were from Halton Hills, said the author of the report, Bonnie Ewart, the

Region's Commissioner of Social Services.

Ms. Ewart also said 57 per cent of one-day trips in the Region were between Georgetown and Milton.

A lot of people from Halton Hills use the van because most of the specialized therapy programs for the disabled are located in Milton and Burlington, said Ms. Ewart.

Until council approved the

prebooking system, Pegasus users had to reserve a seat between a week and 24 hours in advance. A reservation had to be made regardless of how regularly a person took the same trip. But under the prebooking system people only have to make one reservation for repeat trips, explained Ms. Ewart.

Council was asked to approve the system because a similar

but informal arrangement had developed last year.

Although the prebooking system could potentially frustrate infrequent users because of a lack of available seating, the system saves users and staff time, said Ms. Ewart.

"Prebooking also encourages regular use and enables the dispatcher to schedule trips more effectively."

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SATURDAY, APRIL 28th, 1990

24 PAGES

Ontario's budget

Halton will spend more money on social services

By BEN DUMMETT
 The Herald

Ontario's budget announcement Tuesday increasing spending on social assistance and child care will mean increases in Regional spending in these areas in 1991, the Region's treasurer Joe Rinaldo told Halton's administration and finance committee Wednesday.

The Liberal government's finance minister Robert Nixon announced provincial spending on child care will increase by 27 per cent, to \$257 million. It will also spend an extra \$406 million on social assistance. And since the Region pays 20 cents for every dollar the province spends on these programs, the Region will correspondingly be forced to increase its spending next year.

Halton will spend \$10.3 million on social assistance and \$7 million on child care, Mr. Rinaldo said. But Mr. Rinaldo won't know the extent of the increases until this fall. That's when the Region will start planning for its 1991 budget.

Overall, however, "the budget shows the province is headed in the right direction," the treasurer told committee members.

He was referring to the province successfully bringing in a balanced budget for the second year in a row. The province will collect and spend about \$44.5 billion in the 1990/91 fiscal year.

Mr. Rinaldo also highlighted the province's decision to provide municipalities with \$71 million - a 61 per cent increase over last year - for waste management.

The creation of a crown corporation to build water and sewage treatment plants for municipalities could also benefit

the Region, said Robert Rossini, a policy analyst for Halton Region.

The corporation's mandate is still unclear, said Mr. Rossini, but there is speculation the corporation would eventually either provide some funding for municipal-owned water and sewage treatment plants or borrow money on behalf of municipalities to build plants. Municipalities could therefore get a better interest rate, he said. Halton Region, unlike many municipalities, operates its own plants.

"(The budget) looks pretty good but we won't know for sure (from the Region's perspective) until this fall," said Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy. The province has a way of "hiding things," he said after Wednesday's committee meeting.

For North Halton MPP Walt Elliot, the province's announcement to transfer responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to the Ministry of Environment was a budget highlight. The switch "is something my staff and I have been working on for the past three years," Mr. Elliot said Thursday morning.

The MOE is the logical ministry

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View from the top

Climbing the poles at work is at least better than climbing the walls. Halton Hills Hydro worker Ken Hurren unties ropes that kept the hydro wires off the roads after they replaced thin wires along a stretch of Guelph Street between Mill Street and Main Street in

Georgetown Wednesday. The workers were using a new technique so no power was cut to any homes or businesses in the area. (Herald Photo by Alan Mackie)

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