

# Fate of escarpment land in limbo

By NORMAN NELSON

The final chapter of a two-year battle by a local citizens group to prevent a new quarry operation from opening atop the escarpment will have to wait a little longer to conclude.

It was supposed to have wrapped up during a Niagara Escarpment Hearing Tuesday.

Lac Minerals was to have sold about 390 acres of land it had once targeted for strip mining to the Halton Region Conservation Authority (HRCA) and a short uncontested hearing would then have slapped tough land use controls on the entire area which

includes about 600 acres.

But as one member of Keep the Escarpment Environment Protected (KEEP), Patricia Guenther, pointed out, there is still "one raisin not on the cake."

The missing piece is provincial funding.

Because a cheque still officially hasn't been received from Queen's Park all parties agreed to postpone yesterday's hearing to early May.

All parties, however, have all but penned in a positive ending. The HRCA's lawyer told the hearing officer that chances of funding are "very high." HRCA general manager Murray Stephen said the chances are "99.999999... per cent."

In the meantime, a tentative deal between Lac Minerals and HRCA worked out several weeks ago still remains in effect.

Both parties are preparing independent appraisals on the land - expected to be completed by the end of January - which will provide the basis for negotiations.

If a final price can't be agreed upon, Stephen said an independent arbitrator will determine the final price. The province, he explained, is simply awaiting the

results of this process rather than issuing a blank cheque.

KEEP had all its experts armed and ready to go at the hearing, but readily acquiesced to the delay. The group hopes the deal goes through because it means that the hearing to have the tougher controls slapped on the land would be uncontested.

If the deal falls through, everything would likely be back at square one with Lac Minerals fighting to ensure the original designation is kept on the land. This would likely result in a costly and lengthy hearing.

"If it is rezoned our hands are tied," said Lac senior vice-president of operations, in an interview earlier this year.

It was the company's proposal to expand its present quarry operation (about 175 acres on the east side of Bell School Line) onto the adjacent property on the west side that sparked a bitter two-year fight by area residents that led to the formation of KEEP.

Stephen has said that with the lands being adjacent to Kelso Conservation Area there would be not trouble incorporating them into public use.

## Police beat

# Responding to 911, cop nabs youths

A Halton Regional Police officer arrested three people as they walked along a rural road following a break-in at a residence Monday.

According to police, residents of a Lot 22, Concession Three home returned at about 11:50 a.m. to find three people in the house.

The three — two females and a male — fled with approximately \$300 worth of liquor in a blue sport bag.

Responding to a 9-1-1 call, Constable Pat Wood noticed three people walking along 22 Sdrd. with a large bag. After interviewing the victim, the trio were arrested.

Two Georgetown girls, aged 14 and 15, along with 22-year-old man of no-fixed-address have been charged with break, enter and theft.

Further investigation led to the recovery of a vehicle stolen

from the Erin area, police added. One of the female suspects and another 16-year-old male were charged in connection with the stolen vehicle.

## Illegal burning

Firefighters responded to a reported house fire on Guelph St. near Main St. in Georgetown late Tuesday evening. When they arrived they discovered the owner burning wood cuttings in his backyard without a permit. The owner was "informed of the open burning laws" of Halton Hills, according to the fire department. Firefighters were there almost an hour dousing the small blaze, but no damage was reported.

## Canoe taken

A 17-foot green Sears canoe was removed from a beaver pond at the rear of a Fourth Line residence sometime between last Friday and Tuesday.

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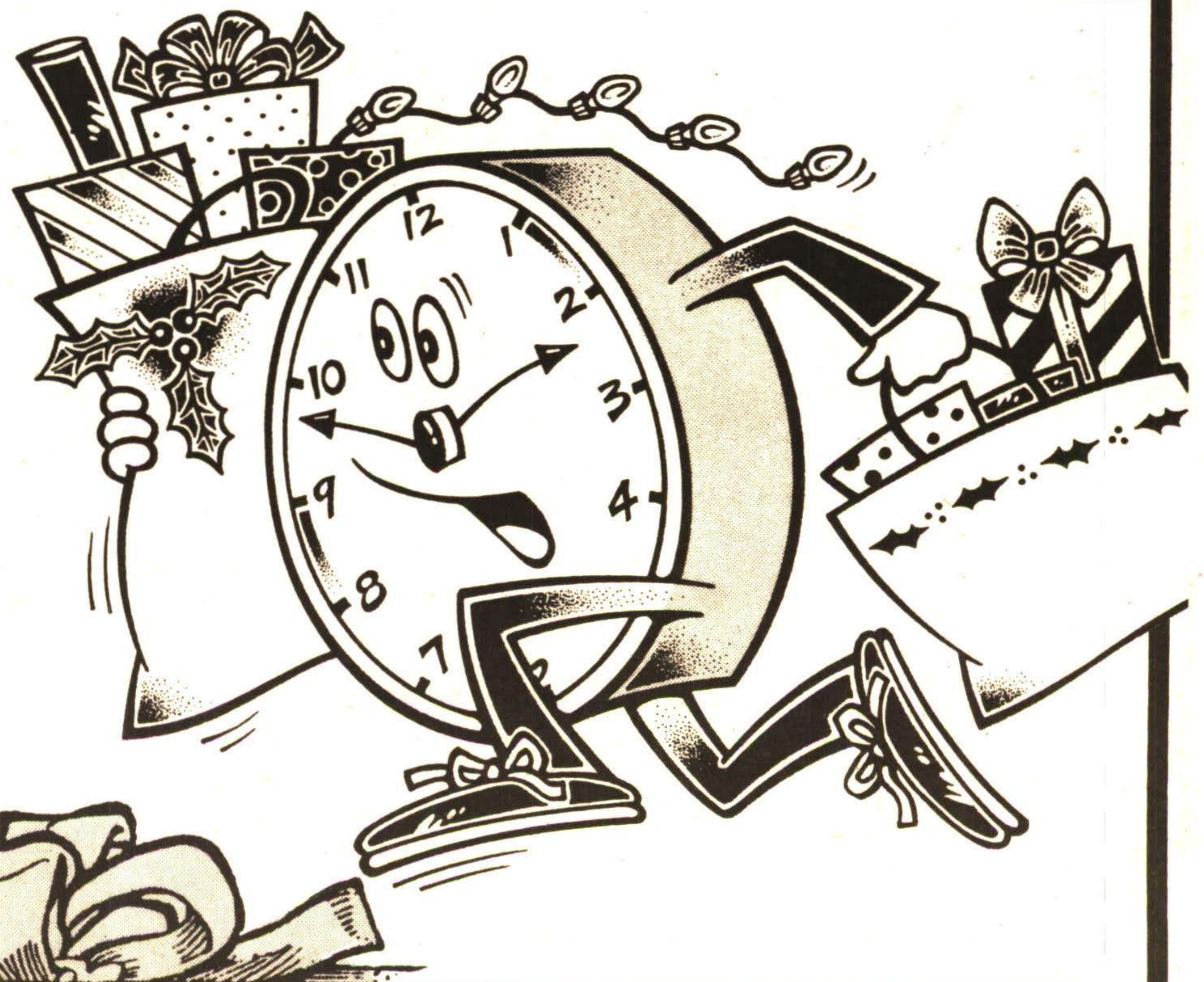
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