

Long, winding road ahead for Regional Official Plan

By STUART JOHNSTON
Halton must create and follow a vision for planning to meet the demands of the future, but it's not going to be an easy road to travel, Town councillors were told Monday evening.

"The thrust of the document is creating a vision... We need a direction, which will be difficult to decide," Commissioner of Planning and Development Rash Mohammed said. "I never said it would be an easy process, but until you have a vision, in what context can you decide what it is you want?"

Mohammed was referring to the Region's proposed amendments to the Official Plan, which outlines land-use policies for the next 20 years.

The main focus of the document is preserving rural and agricultural land, while at the same time developing higher density, "public transit-friendly" communities that are more environmentally sensitive.

A public meeting on the document is scheduled for this Monday (March 25), 9 a.m. at Regional Headquarters in Oakville.

The draft plan calls for 38 changes to the current Official Plan, such as discontinuing retirement severances for farmers, promoting mixed urban uses, new buffer areas between environmentally-sensitive areas and proposed developments, maintain or increase tree coverage and limit rural subdivisions to hamlets or rural clusters.

Mohammed stressed that land-use policies must be changed in order to protect future generations.

"We are talking about the preservation of valued farmland and wetlands — we are saying agriculture is one of the areas that need to be looked at," he said. "Critical and strategic choices must be made..."

"All of these studies can help you create a vision. You must decide if current (development)

trends should be reversed. Decide what kind of community, or life-style that you want 20 years from now, and then work backwards.

"It's going to be increasingly difficult in my view, because the forces of change are so wide. But, if you get a consensus of a vision, then it will make everything easier."

One of the key points of the plan

is to develop a public transit system for the Region. Mohammed noted a transit study is currently being conducted throughout Halton, the results of which are expected to be incorporated into the Official Plan.

Councillor Joe Hewitt questioned whether existing urban areas, such as Georgetown and Acton, will have to promote higher-

density developments, such as condominiums. Mohammed noted mixed urban uses are expected to be encouraged, but it's "not meant to be the blockbusting of existing communities."

"We are talking of locations where mixed uses can be developed...but in fact, most communities wouldn't change," he said. "The fear is that major high-rises will be built in existing communities, but that's not the case. One area in Georgetown — around the GO station — is being looked at for change, but how far we'll go, we don't know yet."

Councillor Al Cook was assured that the environment will be a

priority in the Official Plan when he queried the fate of environmentally-sensitive areas, such as on Main St. South.

"We have to do what we have to do — we must be realistic as well," Mohammed said. "There are going to be some ESAs (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) that are going to be crossed, but we have to avoid crossing them three or four times. We will be preserving wetlands, but there are no absolutes — sometimes we have to cross a valley."

Mohammed noted the final document will not be completed until at least next spring. He added Regional councillors must first approve it before it becomes official.



Captain Alex Ross, commanding officer of the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, 676 Corps, performed the swearing in ceremony with Officer Cadet Jacquie Gopsill, Wednesday night at Georgetown Armory. O/Cdt Gopsill will receive her commission as Second Lieutenant after having completed her first course. She will be working with the cadets in various training capacities, and will handle public relations for the corps. O/Cdt Gopsill is the first female officer to serve with the cadets in four years. The corps will be able to include female cadet members in overnight exercises with her as a chaperon.

TED BROWN Halton Hills Weekend

Police kept busy with rash of thefts from autos

Thefts from autos continue to keep police busy in Halton Hills.

On Wednesday, ownership and insurance papers and assorted tapes worth about \$50 were stolen from the glove compartment of a car on Frederick St. in Acton.

Two males who had apparently stolen a pair of tool boxes from a car on 8th Line near 22 Sdrd in Georgetown were followed by someone who spotted them on the driveway. The witness then found the boxes on 8th Line. The incident occurred on March 9 at about 1:15 a.m.

A burgundy attache case worth approximately \$30 was stolen from a locked car on a driveway on Worden View Rd., off Hwy. 7 sometime between 11 p.m. on Saturday and 9:40 a.m. on Monday.

Sometime between 7:30 p.m. last Sunday and 9:30 a.m. Monday, speakers, a ladies' blouse, cigarettes, beer, sunglasses and cassette tapes were stolen from a parked car at Church and Willow Sts. in Acton. A stereo in the dash was left in place.

Sunglasses and cassette tapes

worth about \$130 were taken from an unlocked vehicle on Wolsely Dr. in Limehouse between midnight and 6 a.m. last Monday.

Ownership and insurance papers and cassette tapes worth \$50 were stolen from a car on Frederick St. in Acton between March 6 and 20.

Business realities

A Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce seminar will help businesses cope with realities in a recession.

Mr. Aldo Makovskis, C.A., and Donne Raymond will present the seminar scheduled for April 30 at noon at the North Halton Golf Club, Georgetown.

You will learn about sound management practices, changing emphasis in a recession, relationships with banks and creditors, providing extra security for loans and a chance to learn from other's mistakes.

Tickets are \$15 and reservations are required. Call the Chamber at 877-7117.

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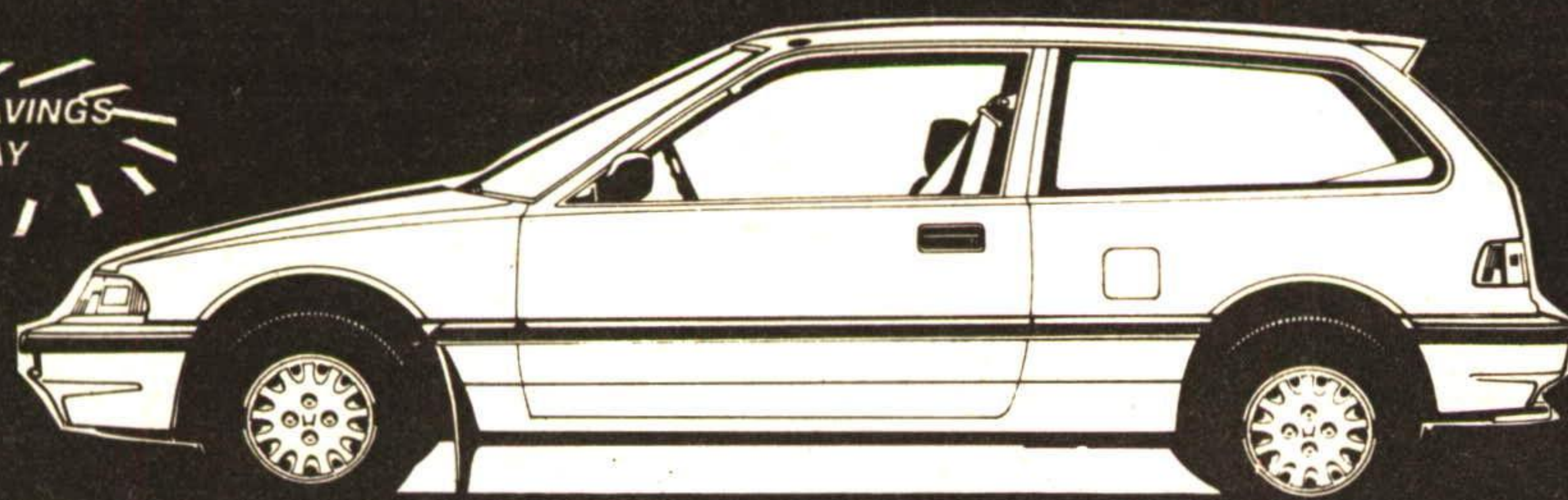


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