

# Affordable housing is just a political tool: Region councillor

By STUART JOHNSTON

Being able to provide affordable housing in Halton under current Provincial guidelines "is a myth," according to Regional councillor Pat McLaughlin.

The Burlington councillor was responding to a statement by a consultant from The Starr Group that the current level of affordable housing in the Region is approximately \$165,000. The figure has risen from last year's \$157,500 because of inflation.

"I'm sick of housing studies — how often do we have to re-invent the wheel?" McLaughlin said Wednesday. "We have the same people saying the same things."

"Affordable housing is a myth — \$160,000 isn't affordable... The only way of getting into affordable housing is with innovative financing. The whole concept of affordable housing means nothing — it's a nice political tool which means more housing will be built for people who can't afford it."

Halton Hills councillor Marilyn Serjeantson added that many homes in town fall within the price range of affordable housing, and suggested that a policy statement on housing is "outdated."

However, consultant E. Starr disagreed, noting the housing market is "cyclical."

"Sometimes the market and the

policy don't go hand in hand, so it's important to get at least 25 per cent of the units to meet the range of household incomes," he added.

The consulting firm has been commissioned by the Region to conduct a Municipal Housing Study, which will establish long term land use planning policies which specifically address housing needs for the next 20 years.

The Town of Halton Hills is also conducting a study on the local level, which will be combined with the Region's conclusions.

The Province has dictated that municipalities encourage a full range of housing types including a minimum of 25 per cent affordable, streamline the approvals process, identify a minimum 10 years' supply of residential land and maintain at least a three year supply of draft approved or registered lots.

A joint Regional/Town public meeting on the housing study will be held at the Halton Hills Civic Centre June 19.

The Town held its first public meeting on the study last November, where approximately 60 residents attended.

The study will combine various housing reports, public input, interviews with councillors and other community representatives, and Provincial guidelines to formulate

the long-term planning strategies of the Region.

According to one component of the study, the Demand and Supply report, 46 per cent of all housing stock is at least 30 years or older, and that nearly two-thirds of the homes in the region are single family.

By 2001, 33,926 additional residential units will be needed to meet the housing needs of the projected population. Within 20 years, Halton Hills is expected to reach its maximum projected population of 60,000 people, according to the local study.

Single parent families amount to nearly nine per cent of all families in Halton, of which over three quarters are headed by females, according to the report.

Average household income in Halton in 1985 was nearly 22 per cent above the Provincial average and 40 per cent of all households at that time earned over \$50,000.

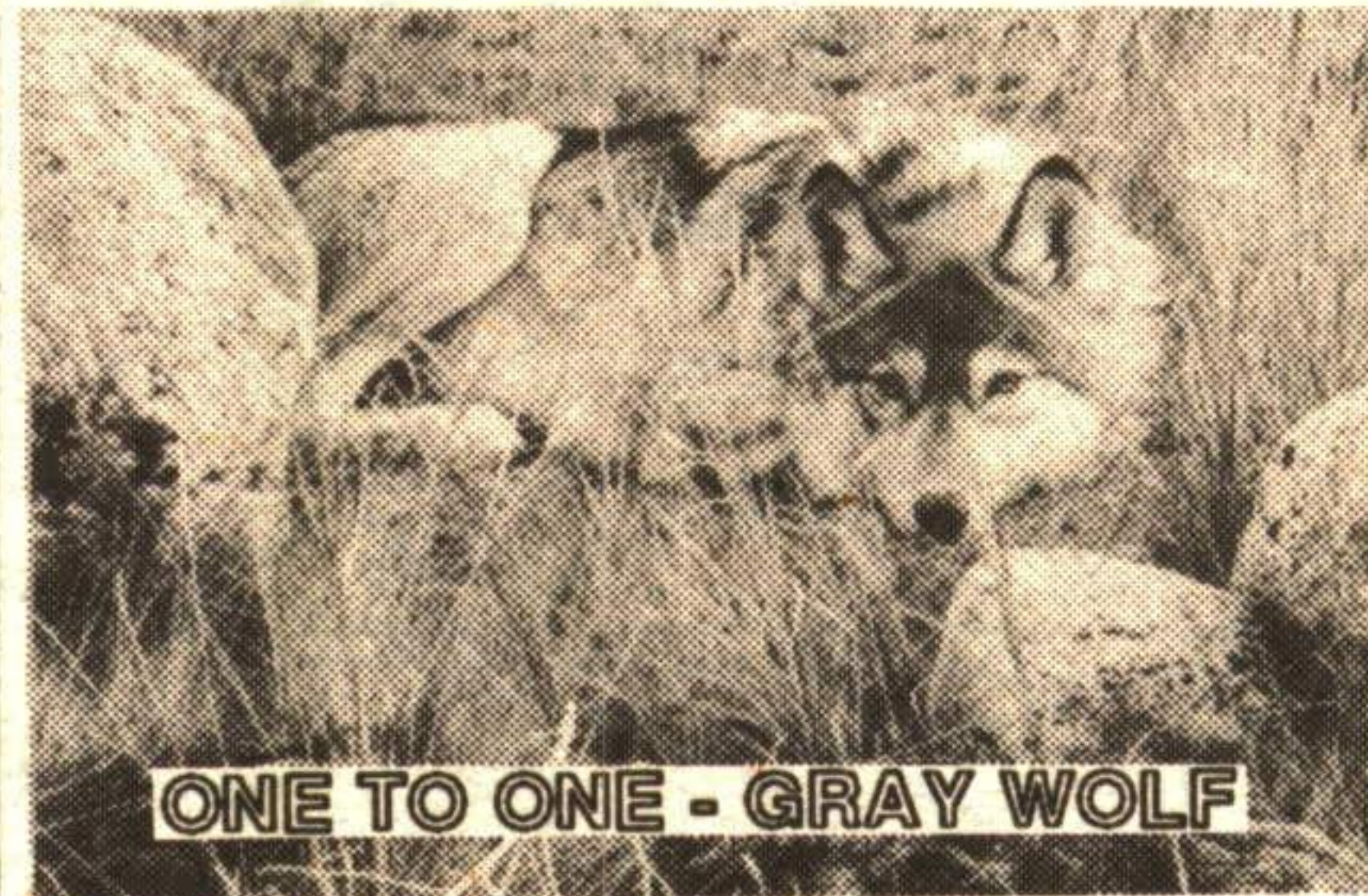
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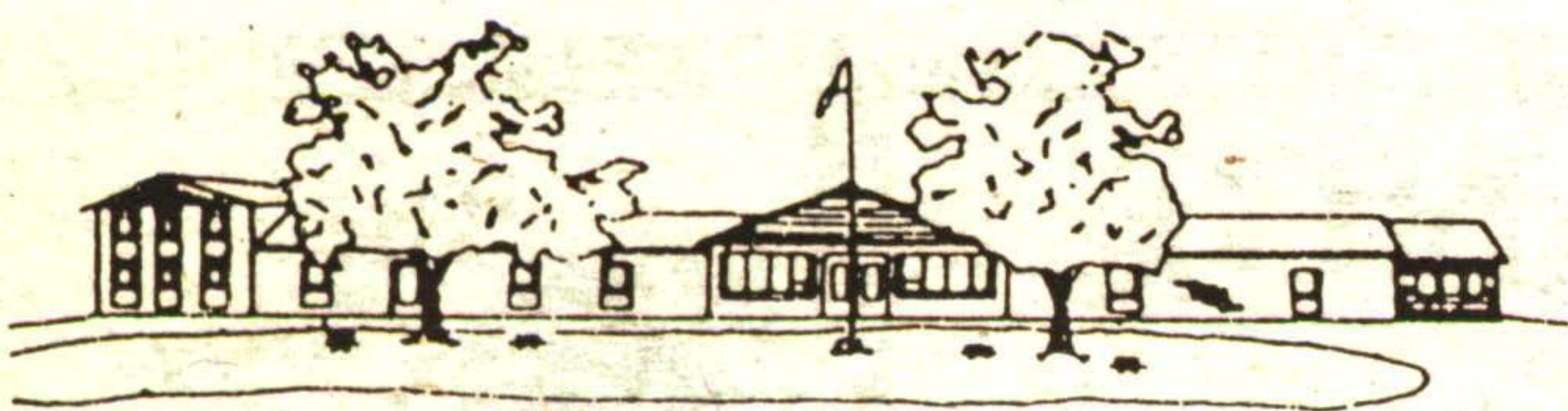
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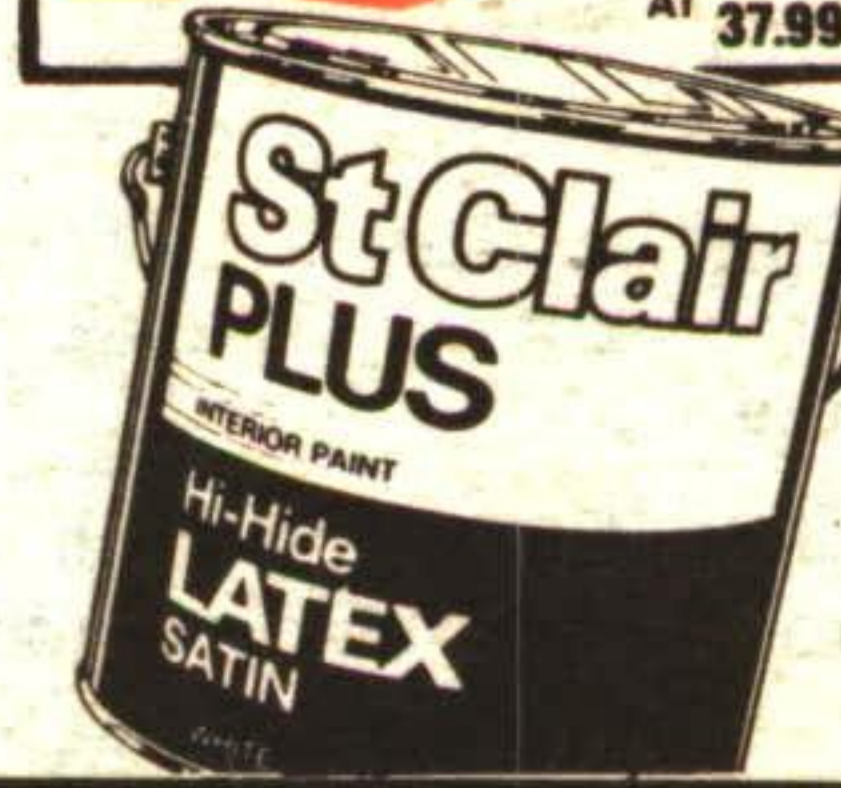
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