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Consultant warns Halton could become 'paved over'

By ROB KELLY
Special to the Halton Hills Weekend

People surging into the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) will spill into Halton at such a rate over the next few decades that the population could more than triple.

With such growth, the place may for all intents and purposes be paved over, a consultant directing a \$4 million area study has warned.

Ray Simpson oversees the complex Halton Urban Structure Review (HUSR) work commissioned by Halton regional council. He told an audience of roughly 80 area politicians and bureaucrats on June 19 that the same growth pressures which made neighboring Peel Region what it is today will engulf Halton.

The GTA is made up of five separate regional-type jurisdictions - Halton, Peel, York, Durham and Metropolitan Toronto. It has grown by approximately 100,000 people annually over the last six years despite the recession, and the trend shows no sign of slowing, Simpson said.

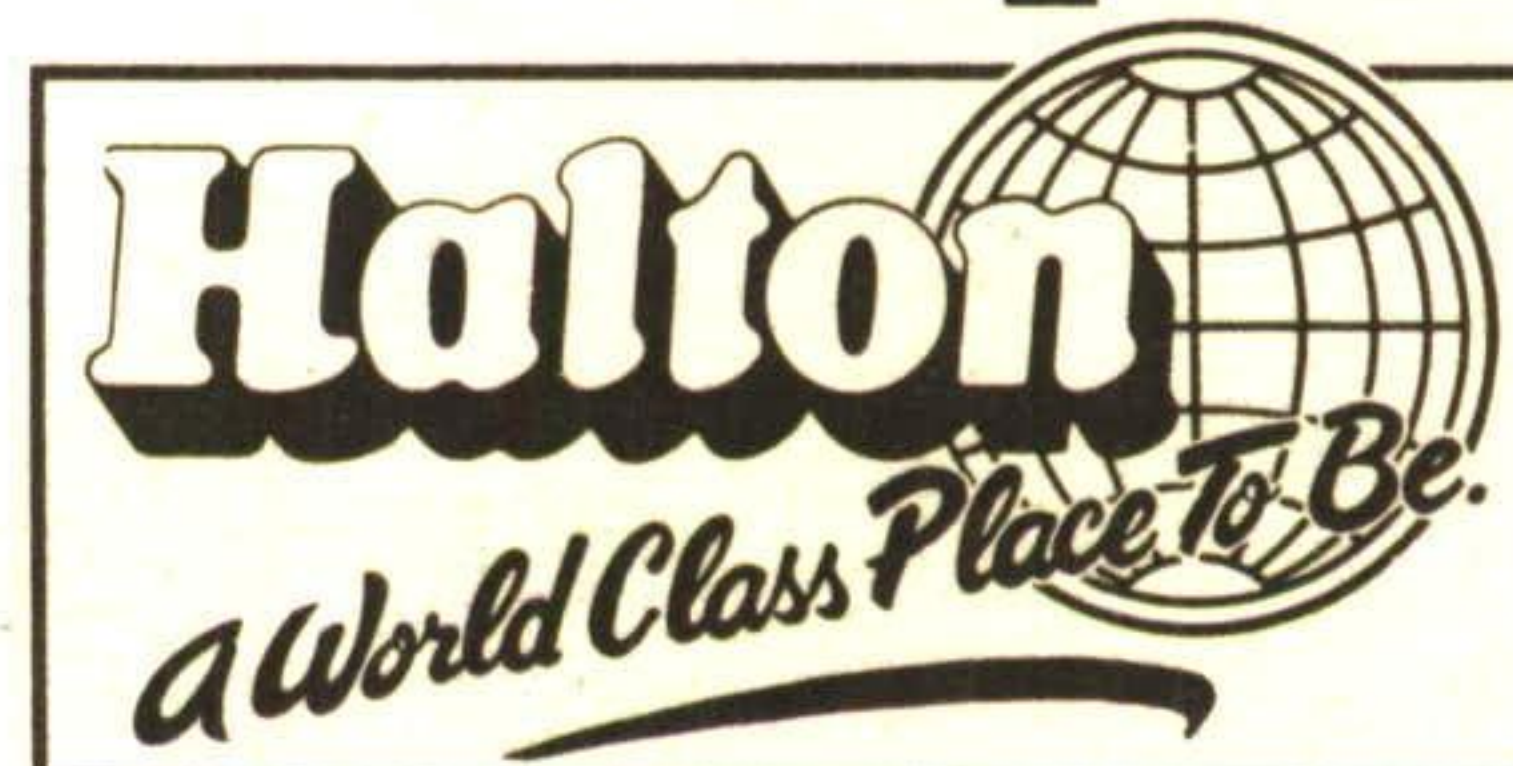
Growth momentum will build toward Halton as other centres in the GTA begin to exhaust both their housing stocks and commercial-industrial land through the 1990s, Simpson predicted to officials gathered at Halton's administration centre in Oakville for a day-long HUSR update.

Currently there are about 313,000 people in Halton but there could be as many as 1,048,600 by 2031, if current migration patterns continue, the consultant said. Using the same data, the GTA population, now roughly 4.2 million, would soar to 9.1 million. Even if the trends subside to more typical levels, Halton will grow to 776,000 residents and the GTA will be home to at least 7.3 million people, Simpson estimated.

One of the driving forces behind the population boom is a world-wide trend toward moving into major metropolitan centres, Simpson said.

"This is not occurring everywhere in Canada. It's highly localized. Eighty per cent of the population growth is in the six largest cities." The Toronto area is responsible for 36 per cent of that, while the remainder is divided in diminishing shares among Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton.

Information gleaned from the 1991 census showed that in the previous five years York Region, north



of Toronto, absorbed 150,000 people. That's 20,000 more than live in Burlington, Halton's most populous centre. Simpson termed it "phenomenal growth."

He also pointed out that the housing of choice for those people continues to be single family, detached homes, and in areas adjacent to Halton in the GTA, it's rapidly diminishing.

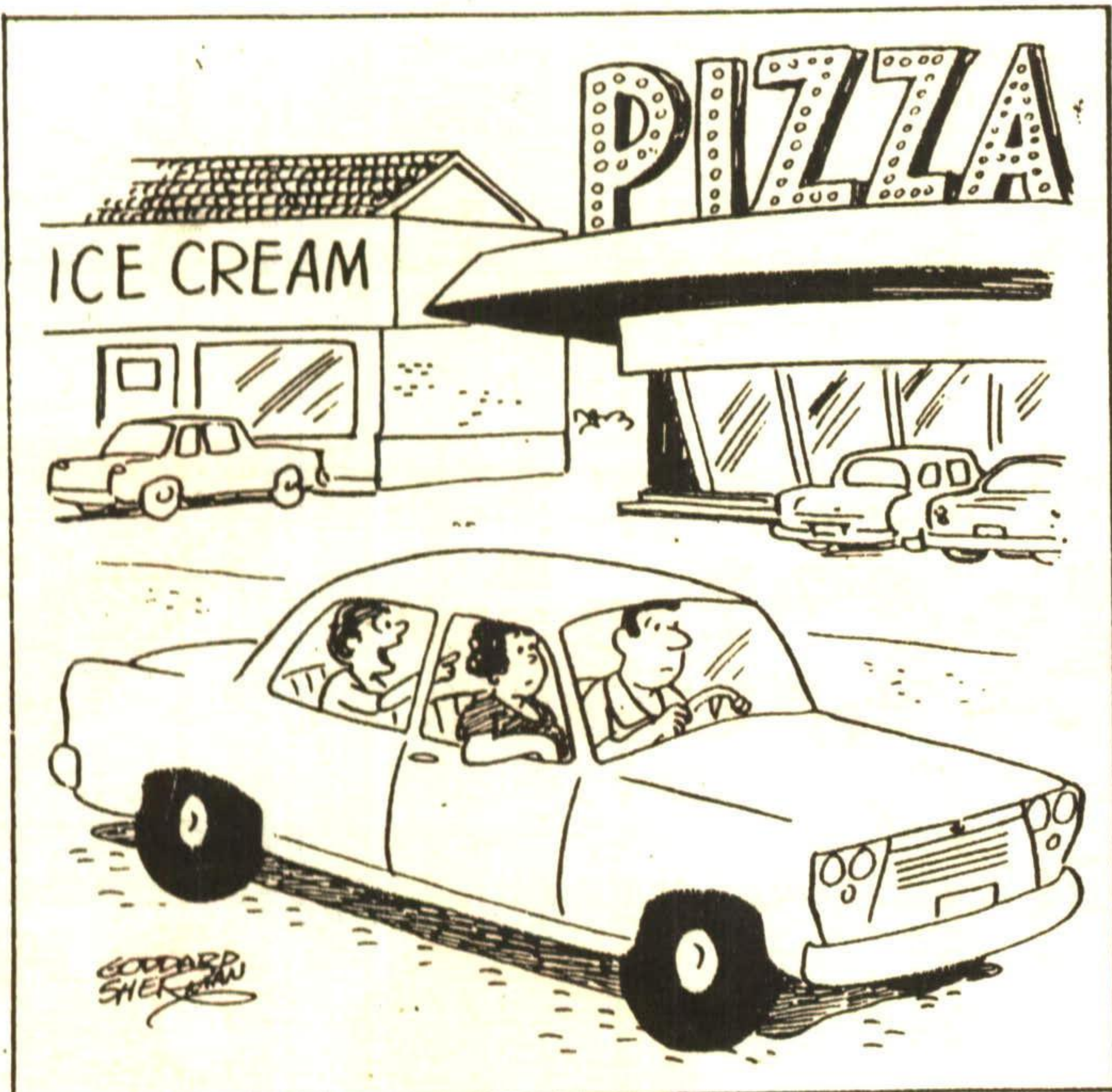
"Halton, over the next 15 years is looking at a very, very strong market for single detached units. Mississauga does not have a 10-year supply and will essentially be out of that component of the housing market."

"The pressure that is going to be brought to bear on Halton is going to be extreme, a wave of development. There's going to be a booming housing market in the 1990s."

Extrapolating to 2031, even under a "reasonable" growth scenario, "basically we have paved it all," Simpson noted.

"We've got to do something about (creating) very strong planning policies," Simpson stressed. "If we don't, we're going to go the Mississauga and Peel route, paving it all over, because that is the growth pressure that is there now. We need some leadership. We've got some real problems."

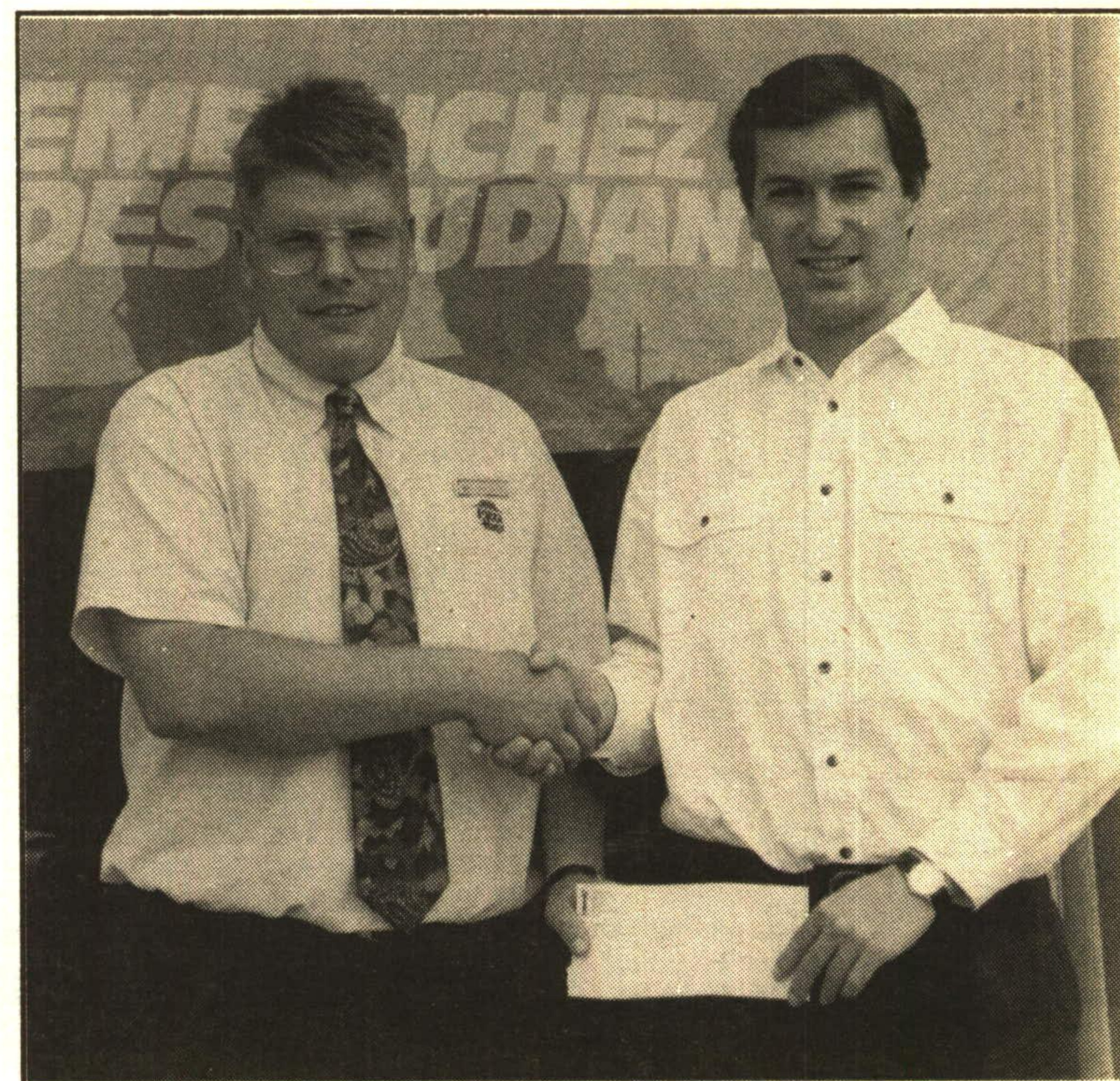
In less than 20 years Halton will require enough land to build somewhere between 18,000 and 33,000 single detached homes, Simpson said. Both Burlington and Oakville will have exhausted their currently planned supply.



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