

# Committee to study tax system

By **ROB KELLY**

Special to the Independent/Free Press

A 21-member committee made up of citizens, regional councillors and MPPs will tackle the tall order of creating a property tax system everybody in Halton can live with in the next 12 months.

Wednesday, after much discussion, Halton Region's administration and finance committee agreed on the composition of the new group, which will explore taxation

alternatives in the wake of the deep schism created by market value assessment (MVA).

Earlier this month, in a meeting that lasted almost 10 hours, regional council postponed MVA for a year and agreed to form the new committee. The special council meeting drew more than 600 mostly angry ratepayers, primarily from Oakville, who roundly condemned MVA.

Halton regional chairman Peter Pomeroy broke the stalemate to force reconsideration of MVA last week, citing the "need to find some common ground."

Exactly what it is the so-called committee on property tax reform will be able to do is unclear. That's one of the reasons it caused so much debate among councillors Wednesday. Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn said it was too large to get much done. Burlington councillor Don Carter worried it was too small.

Originally the proposal called for 20 members - three citizens from each of the four area municipalities, a regional councillor from each of them, and the four Halton MPPs.

But Burlington councillor Tony Whitworth pointed out that the even number raised the possibility of tie votes, and it was changed to 21.

The proposed committee is "cumbersome, too large," said

Flynn. "I don't believe there should be a regional councillor from each community (on it). I know where that's going to take us, it's going to take us into gridlock."

"I can see us heading down the same road again, with Oakville and Halton Hills opposed to Burlington and Milton - and not getting anywhere," Flynn warned. He also suggested there only be two citizens from each community on the committee.

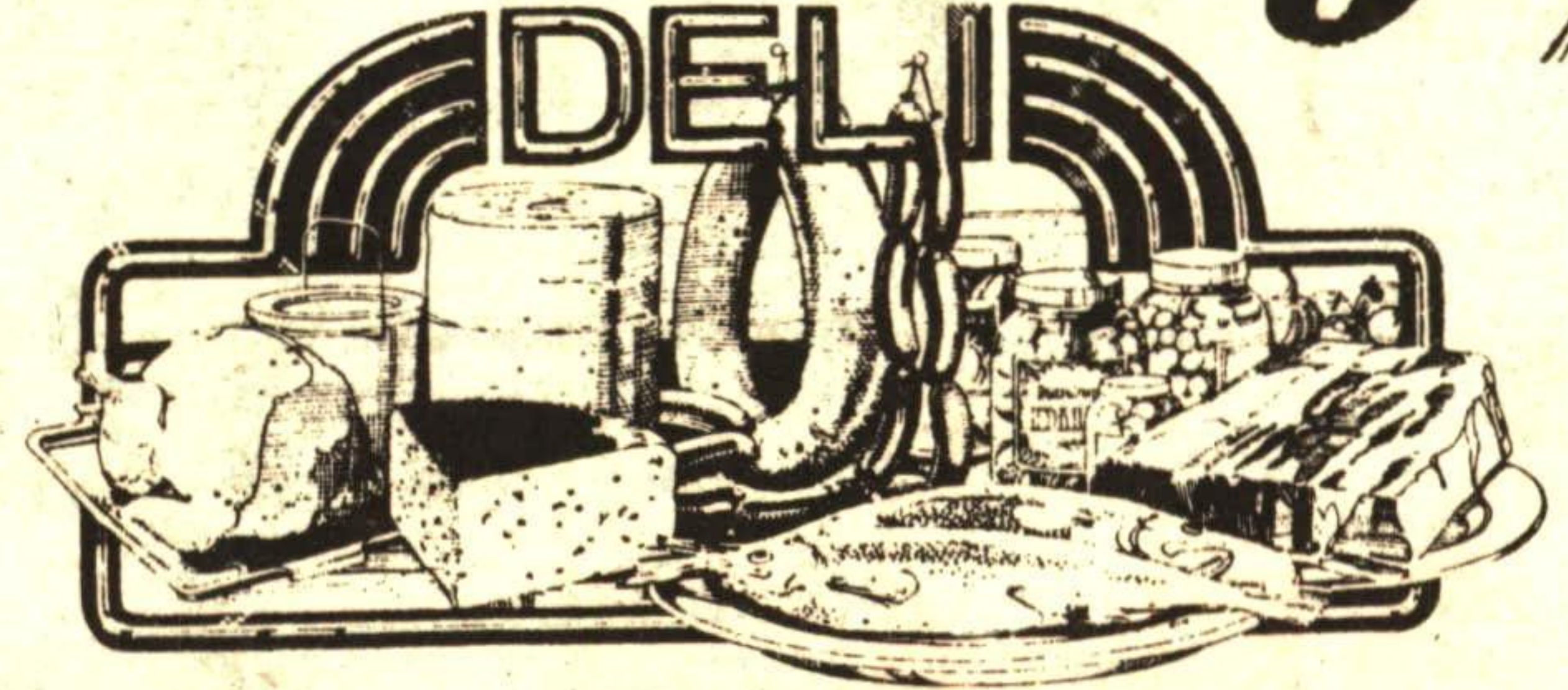
Carter said including just two citizen representatives per community could limit the breadth of opinion on MVA. He wanted five instead.

"Five would make a farce of the whole thing," Flynn replied.

Burlington mayor Walter Mulkevic hoped no one would try to "load the deck" with people sympathetic to their local council's MVA position, something he saw as more likely with fewer committee members.

Pomeroy said it would be "suicidal" for anyone to skew their committee appointments in favor of their MVA stance, since it would kill any chance at compromise.

Councillors decided the committee will have three citizens from each community, one regional or local councillor from each (non-voting), the four MPPs or their delegates, and an independent chairman.



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## Halton Hills setting up own committee

Monday night Halton Hills council approved a resolution by councillor Pam Johnston calling for the formation of a Halton Hills citizen's committee which would discuss alternatives to market value assessment.

The committee will consist of three representatives from each ward and members of the regional committee.

Anyone interested in participating should contact Janet Lunn Stewart, Halton Hills town clerk, at 873-2600.

## Georgetown break-in

Police are investigating a break and enter that occurred Wednesday between 6:45 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. at a house on Treanor Cr. in Georgetown. Stolen was a television set valued at \$2,200. Entry was gained through a kitchen window that had been pried open by a screwdriver.

## Locker theft

A Milton woman has reported to police that her wallet and a walkman were stolen from an unlocked locker at the Acton arena Monday morning.

## Police Blotter

### Youth charged

Police have charged a 14-year-old Acton girl with two counts of threatening bodily harm and obstruct justice in connection with incidents that occurred at Acton High School on Tuesday and Wednesday. Police say the girl threatened two students at the school. She is to appear in Milton

court on Friday, Jan. 15.

### Aggravated assault

A 39-year-old Acton woman has been charged with aggravated assault with a weapon in connection with a domestic dispute that resulted in her 45-year-old common-law husband receiving a knife wound to his upper left arm. Police say the dispute occurred in a Bower St., Acton residence early Thursday morning between the two. The man was taken to Georgetown. Hospital and admitted overnight. The woman has held for a bail hearing Friday.

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