

Region to audit treatment plant

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

Regional council decided Wednesday they would go ahead with the short term audit of Acton's sewage treatment plant, to the tune of no more than \$100,000.

Council members also said they weren't going to accept the Ministry of the Environment's proposal which stipulated the region accept full liability to upgrade the Acton plant, if Black Creek becomes more polluted due to an increase in the town's population by 1,500 people.

Council members discussed the Acton OMB hearing in camera, but recommendations were unanimously passed afterward, and only those lengthy recommendations, not the discussion, were made public.

The upshot was region staff are to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to determine the parameters and cost of the fish habitat study the agency is requiring, then report back to council for approval to go-ahead.

Council also recommended approval of the official plan amendments passed by the town of Halton Hills. The region's lawyer was to inform the OMB the region wants draft approval of proposed plans of subdivision deferred until the MOE issues a permit to take water from the Prospect Park well, the two studies requested by the DFO are completed or the DFO agrees development can go ahead at the same time, without risk of prosecution under the Fisheries Act.

Council also made it clear the region objects to the MOE applying more stringent criteria to the Acton sewage treatment plant, than it has in the past.

The regional chair was directed to write to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to request an exemption for the region and its officers from prosecution under the Fisheries Act, and request the DFO apply the same standards to Black Creek as

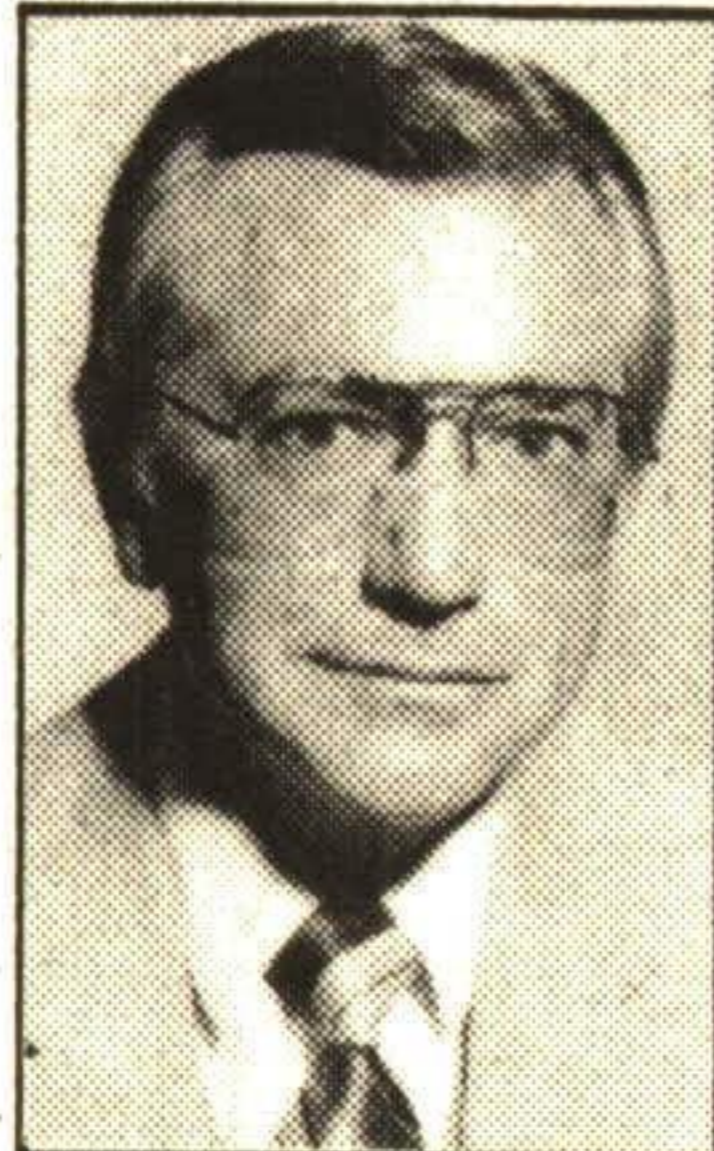
are applied to similar streams and communities in the country.

Council also gave the region's legal department the go-ahead to take the appropriate legal action to ensure the DFO and MOE are applying the same standards to Black Creek.

They also instructed the legal department to look into water pollution control plant water quality and stream analysis in the province, particularly those operated by the provincial government.

Those recommendations were passed after Gord Petch, a lawyer representing Coscan, attempted to allay council's fears of prosecution if development in Acton leads to more pollution in Black Creek.

"The DFO made it clear this problem is solvable," said Petch. "(The fear of prosecution) is just a horrible over-reaction. At the board the DFO gave us as much comfort as you can ever get."



PETER POMEROY

He also said the MOE was over-reacting.

Petch also offered Coscan's consultants, at Coscan's expense, to work along with region staff on the two studies required by the DFO.

He also stressed the developers need to have draft approval for their lands, so they could contribute to the costs of the studies.

Burlington councillor Joyce Savoline said Petch "was not painting the picture correctly, there are many complicated factors."

She said the region could be facing civil suits if interested environmental groups chose to sue them over the condition of Black Creek.

Petch couldn't provide Savoline with a straight answer when she asked him if Coscan would be will-

ing to foot the bill if the region is charged for polluting Black Creek.

Oakville councillor Fred Oliver was concerned about the financial impacts the two studies will have on all Halton taxpayers, so concerned, he filed a controversial notice of motion calling for Halton Hills to sever itself from the region. There was no discussion on the motion however, it wasn't seconded and has been tabled for now.

"I just want to get it out to the public there is interference (from the DFO and non-elected representatives of associations and organizations), said Oliver. "The region is trying to take the proper steps to permit Acton to grow."

"It is unfair that all the people in Halton should have to bear the costs of these studies," said Oliver.

On Thursday morning region lawyer Stan Floras filed regional council's recommendations with the OMB. Some of the lawyers around the table asked board chair J.R. Mills to come to a decision on draft approval for 1,000 persons.

Town lawyer Roger Beaman was adamantly opposed to that.

"In the last three days we have had a real change in circumstances, no stick in the ground is very clear," said Beaman. "All we've got is the region is going to do a process audit."

"Getting into a fight about priorities (which developer gets draft approval) seems like an awful waste of board time and public and private money," said Beaman.

After a break the board chair decided to spend the next few days of the hearing dealing with the official plan amendments, but added the commercial case wouldn't be dealt with in the hearings remaining ten days.

Mills added the lawyers should consult their clients, including the town, to determine whether they want to spend valuable hearing time arguing the draft approval issue.

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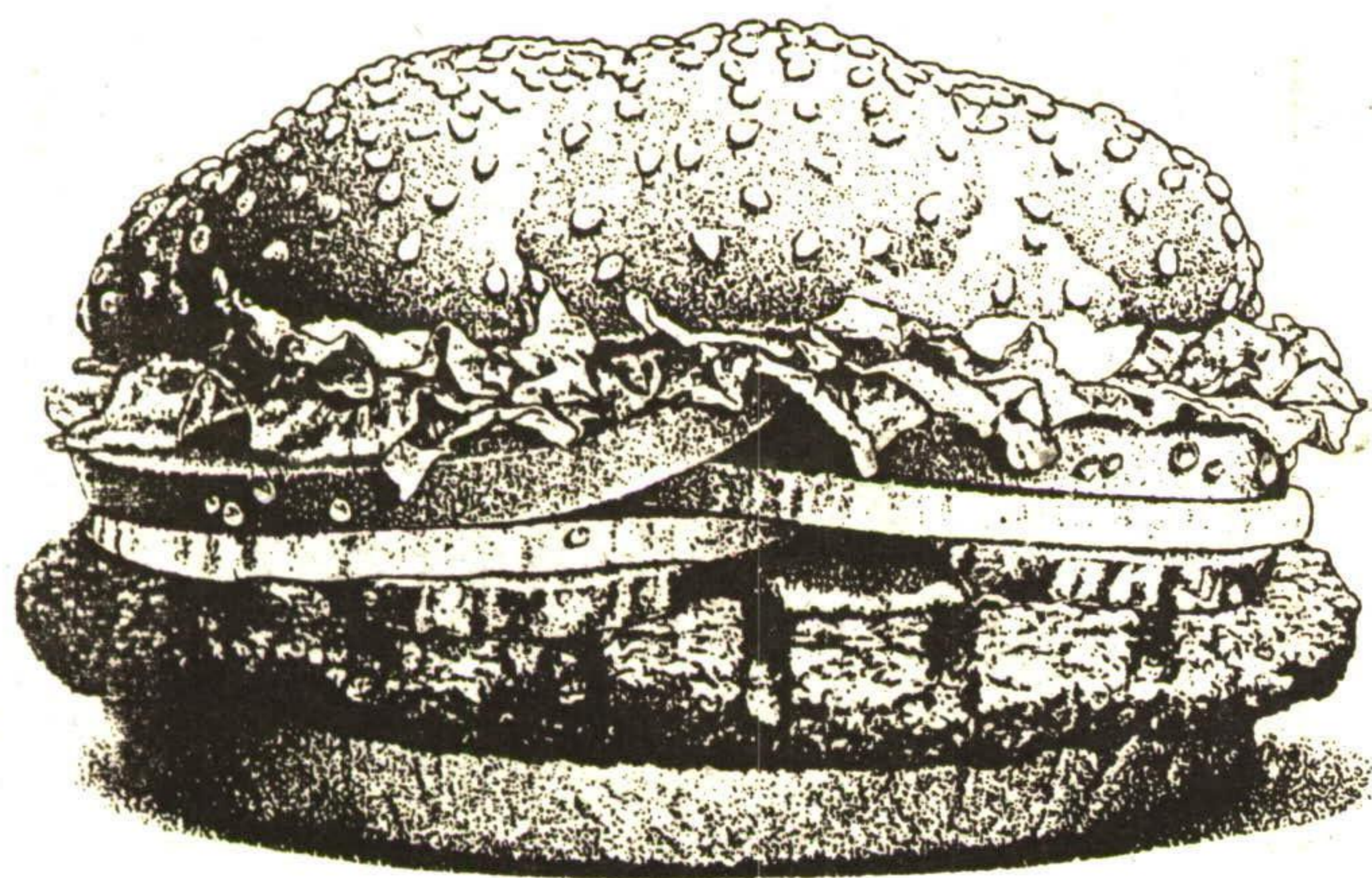
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