

# Halton Hills MSA rejected

By JANET BAINE  
Staff writer



EUNICE MCGOWAN



LORNE DOBERTHIEN

Surprise and disappointment were written all over the faces of the 75 to 100 Halton Hills residents who made the long trek down to Oakville Wednesday night to attend a Halton District Health Council (HDHC) meeting.

They were there to support a proposal put forward by the Halton Hills Multi Service Agency (MSA) committee, which would have put this new organization completely in the hands of local residents.

But the HDHC rejected the idea, and instead threw their support behind the Long Term Care Committee's recommendation of one MSA for the entire region with four area offices. The biggest surprise of the evening was that the two Halton Hills representatives on the council, Kate Murray and Ruth Taylor, voted against the proposal.

"It's just appalling. A whole community is behind this. It just amazed me that the DHC has ignored that," said Eunice McGowan, a committee member and social worker at Georgetown Hospital.

Lorne Doberthien, the president and chairman of Acton Social Services and Information Centre (ASSIC), had a hard time believing what happened.

"I was stunned last night. I woke up at 5 a.m. thinking this is a tragedy for Acton," he said. He doesn't know what will happen to ASSIC, and said despairingly that it could be disbanded.

Halton Hills MSA committee secretary Rosslyn Dowell said in her presentation that if the proposal were accepted, it would be a win-win situation, with everybody in the region coming out on top.

"The situation currently identifies winners and losers. Regardless

of the intent, the perception in the north is yet again, we've been ignored. It feels punitive. We have felt enormous pressure to defend our position, rather than being supported for the tremendous initiative taken by a grassroots community group," she said.

Dowell asked for approval so that Halton Hills can apply for a \$25,000 grant and become one of the first in the province to have an MSA. She believes the funding would allow Halton Hills to have an interim MSA set up in four months.

### Support for CHC

The Halton District Health Council Wednesday approved recommending a Community Health Centre for Halton Hills.

The proposal will be forwarded to the Ministry of Health, which is expected to select four for the province sometime next June.

A Community Health Centre, not to be confused with an MSA, would provide primary health care (using a doctor and nurses) to local residents. Other staff, such as a nutritionist, would promote a healthy lifestyle. Women and youth are target groups for the program.

Kate Murray said she was torn and had given the issue a great deal of thought, but voted against an independent MSA for Halton Hills.

"Governance in the north is the issue, and it's not related to health or social services. It's also roads, sewers and so on. The north feels that sometimes their voices are not heard," Murray said. "I'm torn because I understand where the north is coming from, I understand the process the Long Term Care committee has gone through. But given the responsibility to look at the entire community, I support what the Halton Long Term Care committee has said."

The next day, when interviewed, she said that she felt sure she had done the right thing.

Taylor spoke about the need to share resources in hard economic times.

Bob Wood, a HDHC member and chair of the Long Term Care committee, noted that the committee aimed at reaching a consensus, but the final vote was the 17 members from Burlington, Oakville and Milton against the three representing Halton Hills.

"My feeling is that that input has been there and that input has been considered and the model that we've come up with will serve Halton's interest the best," Wood said. Local advisory committees are planned to help decide what will happen in each area.

The Halton Hills MSA committee planned to meet on Friday to decide what they would do next.

"It's off to Queen's Park," said McGowan after the meeting. "There's lots of history of the ministry not accepting recommendations by the Halton DHC. I was on it for five years (from 1984 to 1989), and there were lots of recommendations that the Ministry didn't accept."

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