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'HOMETOWN PAPER, NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS!'

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1995

Council against 'super city' Phase-in program cancelled

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
 The Acton Tanner

Halton Hills Councillors are worried about their very existence — and rightly so.

With the Harris government poised to pass legislation that will drastically change the face of municipal governments in Ontario, Town councillors are especially concerned with Minister of Municipal Affairs Al Leach's favourable comments in the media, supporting the concept of a super city, to deal with GTA problems.

Next Friday, the Tories plan to pass an omnibus bill giving Leach unprecedented power to restructure municipalities.

That restructuring could include annexation of parts of a municipality to another, amalgamation of municipalities, separating a municipality from a county or dissolving or creating new towns and cities. This would mean the government could create just what Halton Hills fears most — a new GTA super city and government. At Monday night's general com-

mittee meeting, prompted by Acton Councillor Gerald Rennie, Town politicians went on record, again, opposing a super city and asking that the GTA problems be solved, without deteriorating the small-town quality of life enjoyed in Halton Hills.

Rennie pointed out Town residents value their community life and want to retain the intimacy of local councils, which are the most effective and efficient way to deal with purely local matters.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette

supported Rennie's motion.

"The local councillors are probably the most intimate politicians with the people," Bonnette said, "and I think if this super city concept goes ahead, we could have someone from Oakville, or even Brampton, representing us, and that's not what municipal government is about."

Councillors voted to send their motion condemning a super city to their local MPP, the Premier, Halton Region and Halton's other three municipalities.

Newly-raised concerns about the potential cost and complications of phasing-in the impact of Region-wide Market Value Assessment (MVA) convinced Town councillors to flip flop, reversing their earlier decision to spread the burden of tax increases over two years.

Town Treasurer Andy Koopmans said he would need an extra staff person to deal with the phase-in plan and asked for \$30,000 to hire someone for one year.

Although Halton Hills will benefit from MVA by paying \$2.1 million less to the Region in Town and school board taxes, 66 per cent of Acton homeowners face tax increases as a result of MVA.

In order to cushion the tax blow, councillors initially voted to phase-in the MVA increases over two years, but they quickly changed their minds when faced with the cost of the policy and how few taxpayers would benefit from it.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette, who championed the phase-in program, said changing his vote was difficult but necessary.

"The cost of the phase-in program would be between \$30,000 and \$50,000 and that translates to an extra one-half per cent tax increase for everyone in Halton Hills," Bonnette said.

"Only six per cent of all residential properties would be eligible for the proposed phase-in program, and in all good conscience, I now can't support it."

Councillors instructed staff to proceed with an enhanced pre-authorized monthly payment program for property taxes and to extend the equalized payment program, now available to homeowners, to businesses in Halton Hills.

FLYING HIGH!

Corey Brock, 14, becomes airborne while trying out his snowboard at Blue Springs Golf Club. The Acton High School student was enjoying a recent day off from school. (Karen Wetmore photo)

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