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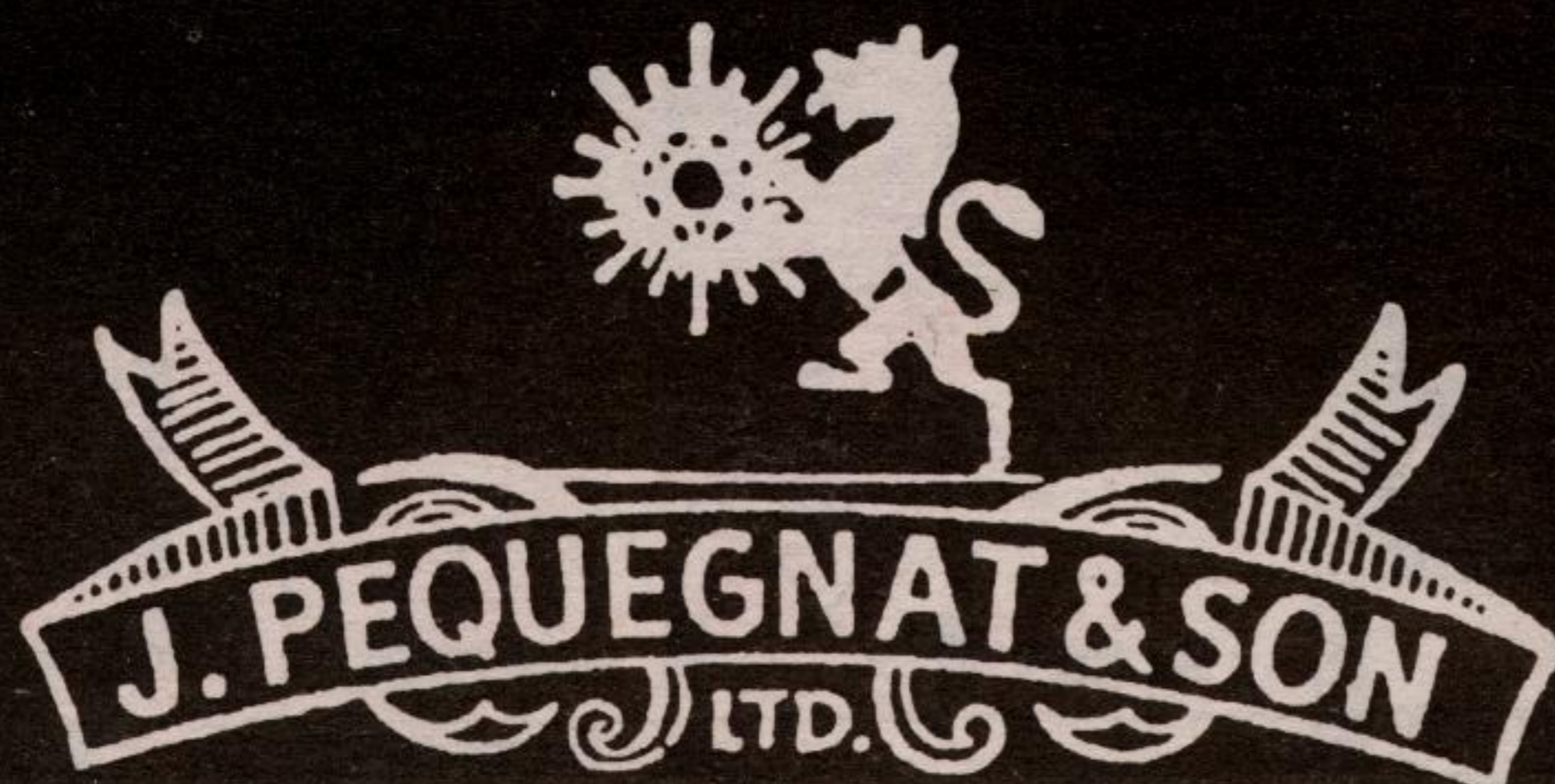
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Sale Under Licence #961603

Coalition acting as watchdog

Is it possible to find affordable housing in Halton? How will the Harris government affect Halton residents' chances of finding safe, decent and affordable housing?

To answer these questions, the Halton Housing Coalition is acting as a watchdog on the Harris government's policies and their impact on housing in Halton. Every six months the Coalition will provide a report card on housing affordability and availability for low and moderate income households.

Right now, in Halton Hills, Burlington and Milton there is a gap of over \$270 per month between the av-

erage three bedroom unit rent and the maximum shelter component of social assistance (the portion of the cheque designated for housing). Approximately 25 per cent of Halton households cannot afford the average rent for a three-bedroom home based on shelter costs not exceeding 30 per cent of the household gross income.

Newspaper advertised rates tended to be higher than those in Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation's rental survey. This widens the affordability gap even further. Families in this type of housing can expect to use 50 per cent of the allowance for basic needs, such as groceries, to cover their rents. A family of four on social assistance paying average rents in Halton has less than \$300 to cover all other monthly costs.

Halton's vacancy rate at October 1995 was less than one per cent. A healthy vacancy rate is three per cent.

The waiting lists for social housing remain high. In April of this year, the Halton Housing Authority's waiting list totalled 906 applications and over 1,200 applications were on Halton Non-Profit Housing Corporation's waiting list.

The last rental housing units to be built in Halton were started in 1994 under the non-profit housing program. In July 1995, the Harris government cancelled 247 affordable rental housing units slated for construction in Halton. The private sector has not built any rental housing in Halton since 1994 (six units).

Halton Housing Coalition will monitor these issues and report back at the end of 1996 on any changes to the housing opportunities for Halton residents.

The Coalition is made up of housing and service providers in Halton who are concerned about the quality of housing for low and moderate income residents.

MP praises leasing decision

Guelph-Wellington MP Brenda Chamberlain has welcomed the release of the White Paper on Financial Institutions, and congratulated the federal government in its decision not to proceed with the issue of auto leasing.

"As chair of the Liberal caucus committee on economic development, I am pleased that the White Paper does not include any recommendation regarding auto leasing. This means that the status quo will remain. The committee recommended that this issue not be raised in the White Paper, and I am pleased that the government has accepted our recommendation," Chamberlain said.

This is the third committee recommendation accepted by the government in the past three months.

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