

The North Halton Compass

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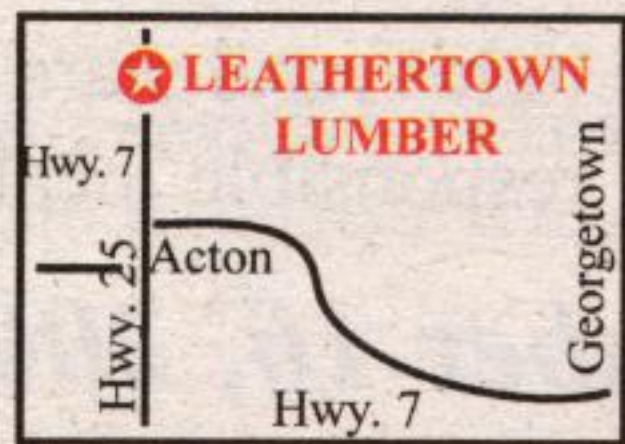
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BRASS TACKS – Editorial

Municipal overhaul must be a priority for McGuinty's Liberals

With their handy win in Ontario, McGuinty's Liberals now have a great many promises to fulfill.

One issue discussed during the provincial campaign was municipal reform. As the Feds downloaded on the provinces and subsequently the province was forced to download on its municipalities, the role of local, regional and county councils grew significantly.

No longer are local councils just deciding where your dog can poop, they're also deciding where you can't light up a cigarette. Except, of course, the old boys down at the local Legion!

Seriously, though, as the great increase in the number of municipal election candidates across Halton indicates, the role of local government does matter.

With growing responsibilities, however, increased accountability must also come.

One vague area that needs

immediate clarification is conflict of interest rules. It baffles the mind that the current rules for conflict are largely self-regulated. While Allan Rock suffers in the nation's parliament from constant harping from the opposition over a plane ride and a fishing trip, the current Mayor of Milton sees no conflict in accepting campaign funding from an aggregate company while sitting on the board for the Niagara Escarpment Commission in 2000. Conversely, Milton Ward 3 incumbent Cindy Lunau declares conflict of interest over Woodbine Entertainment's proposed Mohawk expansion because her daughter works at an entry-level position at the Campbellville facility. Where's the balance here, people?

In Halton Hills it gets even better. Apparently, that Town's CAO may have ousted this summer for doing his job too well. As more facts concerning Steve Andrew's departure begin to surface, the pos-

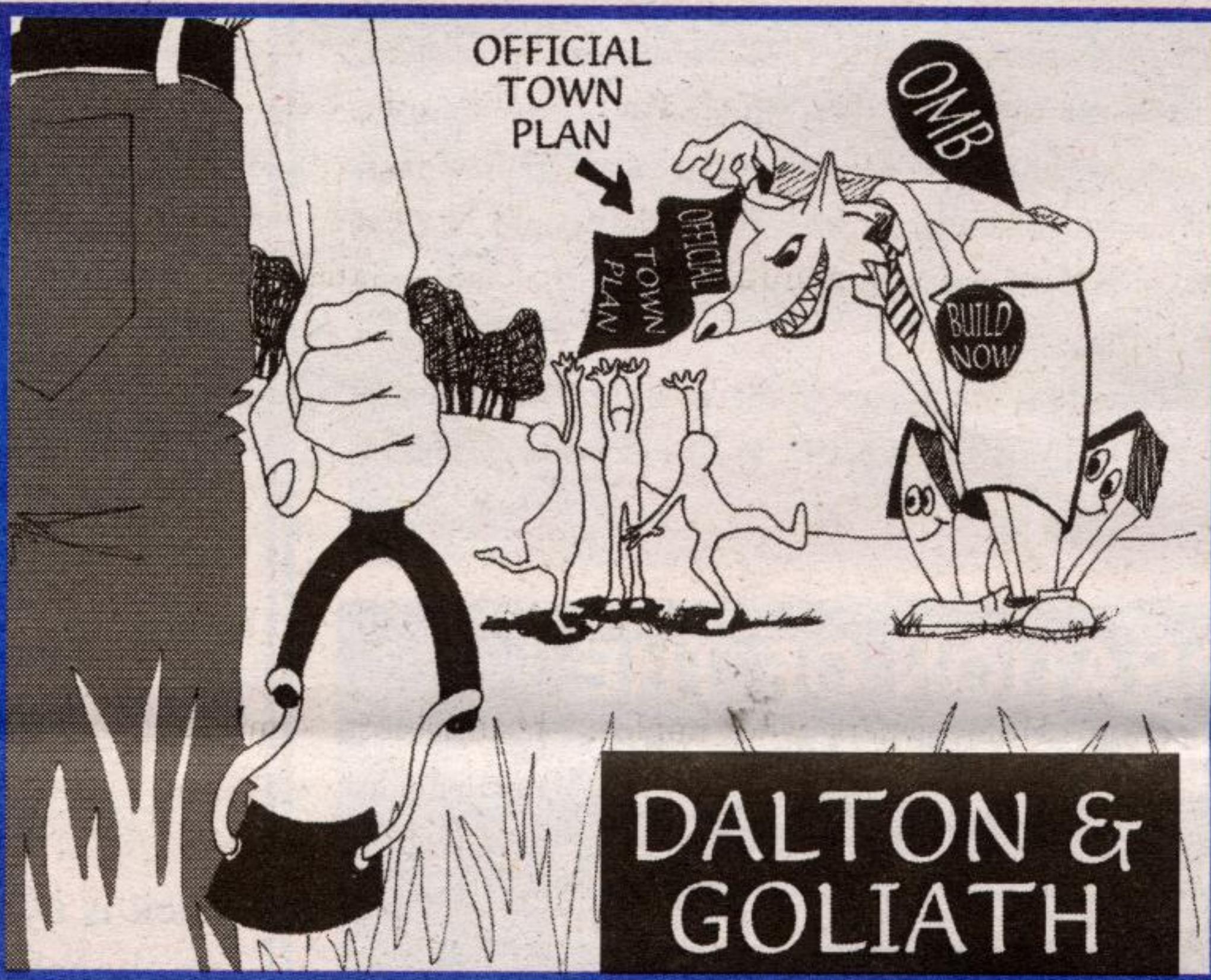
sibility exists three councillors may have a conflict of interest because of their association with a local golf course. If it turns out the former CAO was forced to leave because of his attempt to secure a parcel of land for Halton Hills, Councillors Fogel, Johnson and Lewis, you got some 'splaining to do!

Of course, the coup de grâce was performed in-camera, behind closed doors under the guise of an emergency meeting. A justifiably curious public may never know the whole story. And those on council who supported the CAO are hog-tied from any disclosure concerning Mr. Andrews departure because of the current municipal laws.

Generally, the Ontario Municipal Board is perceived by the public as a big hammer by developers to smash municipal official plans. Why bother to vote for people representing your interest when big business has their high-powered lawyers circumvent the will of the community? Can anybody say "low voter turnout?"

Fortunately, there may be light at the end of the tunnel for municipal voters. The provincial Liberals promised to review the OMB and its role during the campaign. Also, a report circulated by The David Suzuki Foundation calls on all levels of government to end urban sprawl.

Let's hope the Red Machine at Queen's Park remembers its promise to review the municipal structure and takes steps to ensure the will of the province's citizens is better and more openly represented at the local level.



BLUE SPRINGS SOAPBOX – Letters to the Editor

The lead-up to the current municipal election is a good time to discuss the future shape of Milton. The proposed 500-unit "Milton West" subdivision on Main Street west of the LCBO is a key issue. This land is located past the

railway overpass toward Tremaine Road. It consists of meadow, horse pasture, open space and a few homes and working farms that are a part of Milton's rural character and natural environment.

Milton has designated enough

land for 20 years of residential development. It would be profoundly sad and single-minded to put yet another subdivision in the shadow of the escarpment on land currently protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The developer and our

outgoing Town Council have taken us on a path that would make this land part of the Milton urban area.

Council made a decision to support this development at a provincial hearing three years ago. Since that decision, our Mayor and various councillors have said that they would make a different choice if they had an opportunity to do it all over again. Our next council has a fresh chance to take a new position when the matter comes back before the Ontario Consolidated Joint Board in a few months.

During this election period, specific matters such as this call for clear declarations of intent from candidates asking to represent us. In that spirit, I would like the assurance of our municipal candidates that, if elected, they will protect these important lands from subdivision development.

Chris Myers

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