

Ontario Trails Strategy could threaten private land ownership

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for both the government and stakeholders.

"I think it's important to note that we're not working on a trail system but a trail strategy," says Gary Wheeler, "We haven't made any final decisions yet."

The process began last fall and the province rolled out a number of workshops and regional consultations that ran over several months with stakeholders from a wide variety of groups and the strategy should be launched this summer.

"It's a strategy that in essence, will recognize the needs of all users," says Wheeler.

The government acknowledges a number of challenges that include allowing motorized versus non-motorized vehicles, economic sustainability, landowner concerns, safety, questions about tourism and resolving conflicts.

Opsteen attended one of the Toronto sessions in order to voice the concerns of some local landowners in Halton.

Farmers in general are frustrated by having things pushed upon them such as the greenbelt, notes Opsteen and he has not seen

any indication that for certain participation in the trails system will be optional.

Opsteen also wonders if the government might consider offering some benefit or compensation to those landowners who do opt in.

"I don't see that the farmers are getting any benefit from it, right now," says Opsteen.

There are other issues that are on the table for discussion including the issue of property rights, bio-security maintenance and liability.

"If someone gets hurt on your land, who will be liable?" asks Opsteen. "I would hate to see someone lose their farm, if someone was to get hurt."

Although the strategy has not yet been finalized, there is no information available regarding a plan for dealing with those who are dissatisfied with the plan. Last day for public input was March 31.

For more information about the Ontario Trail Strategy, try the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation's website at www.tourism.gov.on.ca. Click on the Sport and Recreation link, then choose Recreation and then choose Ontario Trails Strategy.

"I DON'T SEE THAT THE FARMERS ARE GETTING ANY BENEFIT FROM IT"

Halton Region stands up for farmers

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"We're looking to have more compatible relationships between residents and farmers," said Jane Clohecy, Halton Region's Director of Planning and Transportation Services.

The voluntary guidelines, which will now be referred to and referenced in Halton's Official Plan, include clarifying the provincial Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) policies as well as looking to the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and other legislation.

Burlington Councillor John Taylor had objected to the guidelines leaving the necessity of a permit as optional and recommended an amendment that would have the wording of the guidelines changed to ensure a permit is needed when changing from one form of livestock to another. However his motion did not pass.

"I only proposed it for the Niagara Escarpment Plan of Burlington," said Taylor. "This area has rural residential characteristics."

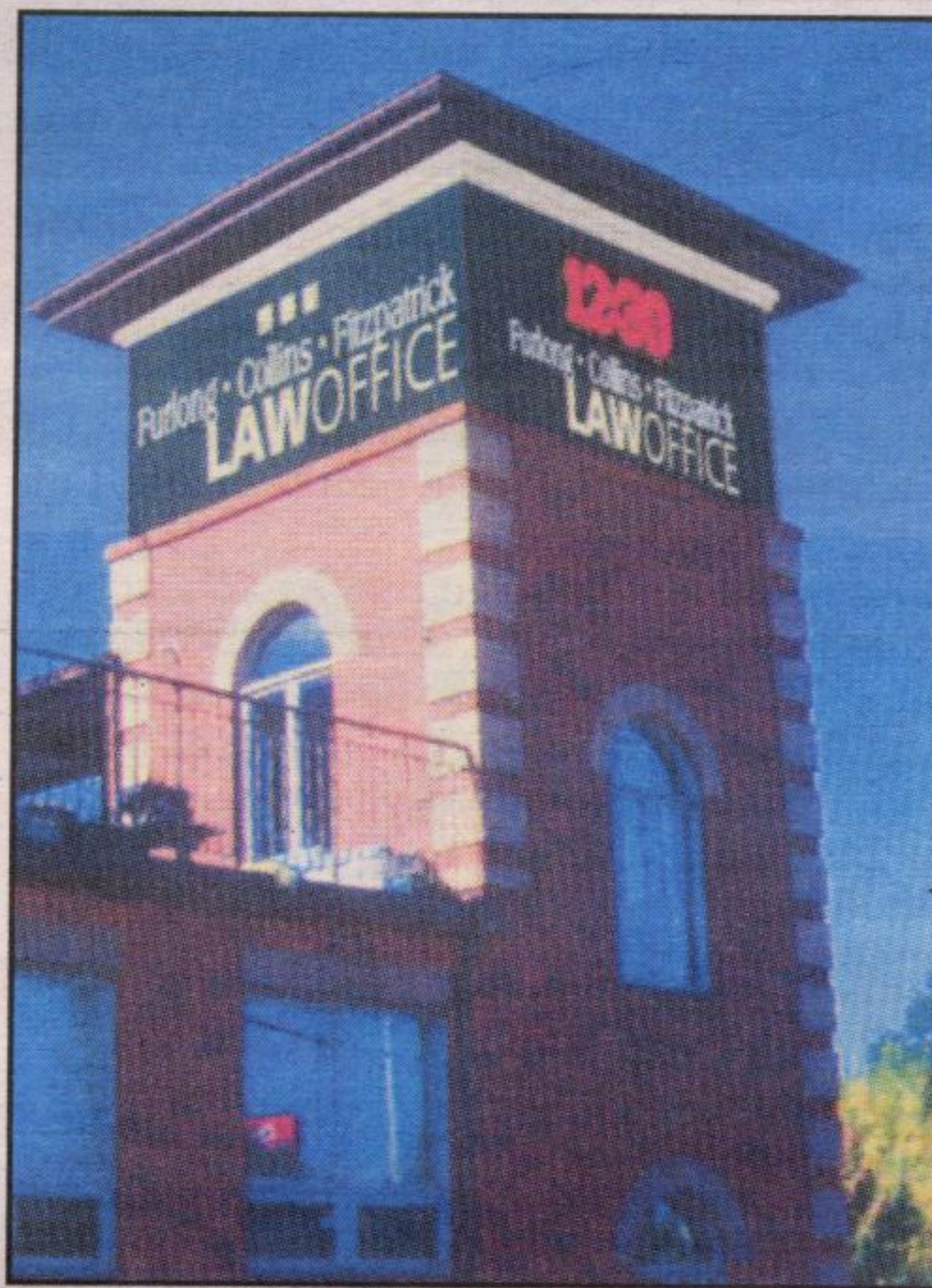
In response to Taylor's request for the amendment and to his assertion that the area in question was unique, council took a tour, said Clohecy. The tour was not enough to convince council and when staff reported back, they found that different parts of Halton have similar characteristics; that the area in question is not particularly unique.

This and the fact that the area falls under the planning jurisdiction of the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Region would have little control over enforc-

ing Taylor's amendment put an end to Taylor's request which was supported only by Councillors Denison and Wallace.

"In the end the majority of council voted against," said Taylor, adding, "but the guidelines do not address the problem that I was trying to address."

For more information on the guidelines, contact the Region of Halton at 905-825-6000.



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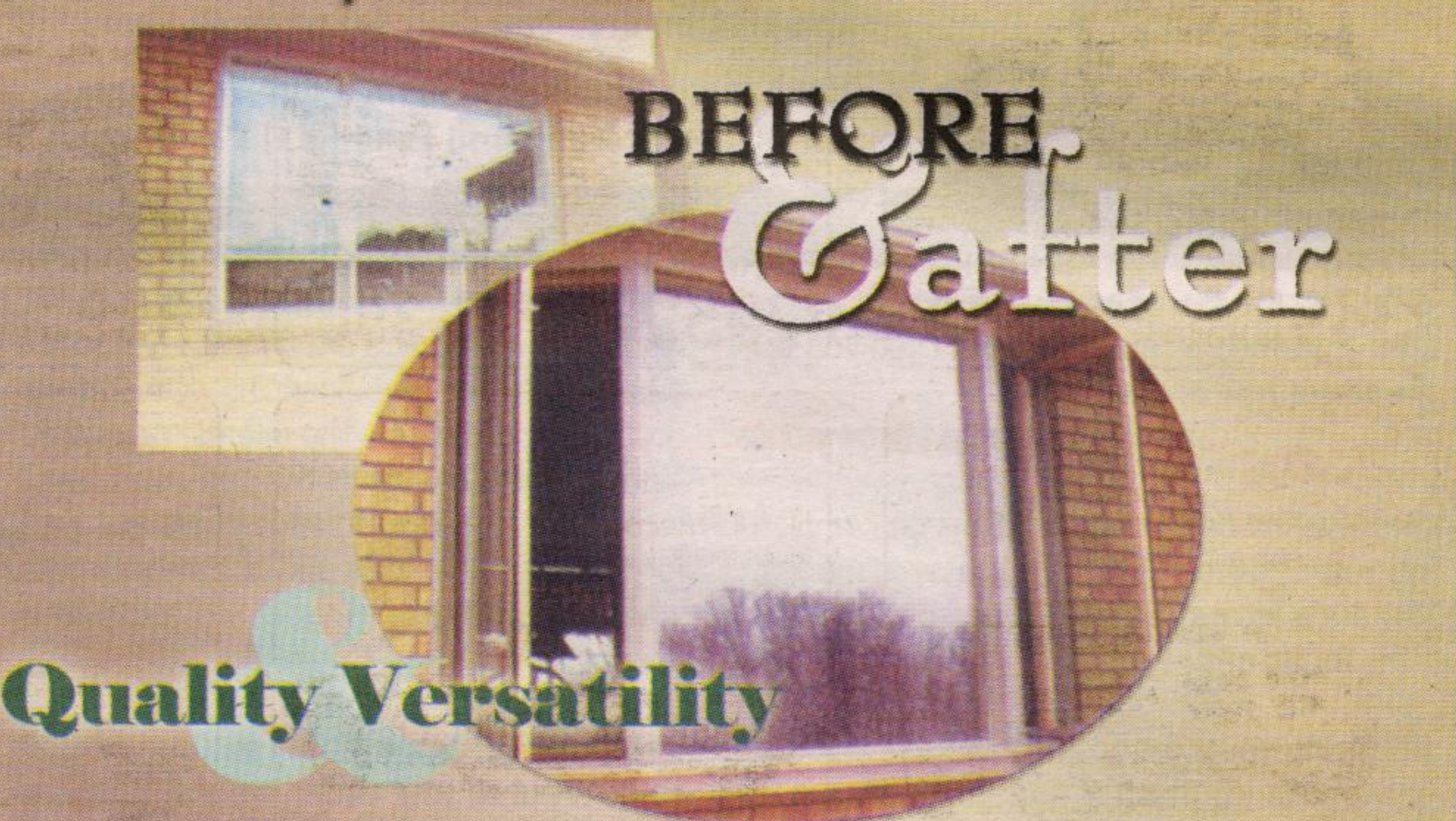
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