

Elliott fears move to proposed City of Halton

Meet the Town of Halton Hills Ward 1 elected representatives — continued.

The second in our series of interviews is with Coun. Norm Elliott, 54, an Acton resident since birth. He is an insurance broker, married and has three grown children. He served one term on Acton council prior to Regional government and was elected to his first term on Halton Hills council in 1985. He has returned four times since then.

He has been on the Halton Hills Library Board since 1976, Heritage Halton Hills for nine or 10 years, the town interview committee which interviews applicants for senior staff positions for eight or nine years, the municipal assistance committee which reviews applications for town grants, Credit Valley Conservation and chairs the town's Senior Advisory Committee.

Elliott says the most important issue for council is the future of Halton Region. He is really concerned about what the province envisions for regions in general and Halton in particular. As the smallest municipality in the Region, Acton needs to be really aware of what is happening. Acton already lost much of its voice when it went from a full council to three representatives on Halton Hills council and one representative at Halton Region. Now there are "ominous signals" of still more change as regions react to provincial calls for downsizing. Rumours suggest a move to press for the formation of the City of Halton instead of a Region with four municipalities.

The length of time spent on his council duties varies from week to week, Elliott says. Some weeks it would be five or six hours; others it would be 20. Usually reading agendas and preparing

for meetings take him a couple of hours, but that expands at budget time when councillors need to do a lot of background analysis of figures and reports.

Interview committee meetings can take a full day when there are a number of candidates to meet. This year with the position of town clerk, chief administrative officer and now the treasurer to be filled, that committee has required an unusually heavy workload.

Elliott unwinds with his astronomy and gardening. He started examining the stars as a kid of 13 and has volunteered with the town recreation department to provide the Starry, Starry Night program each spring and fall for five years.

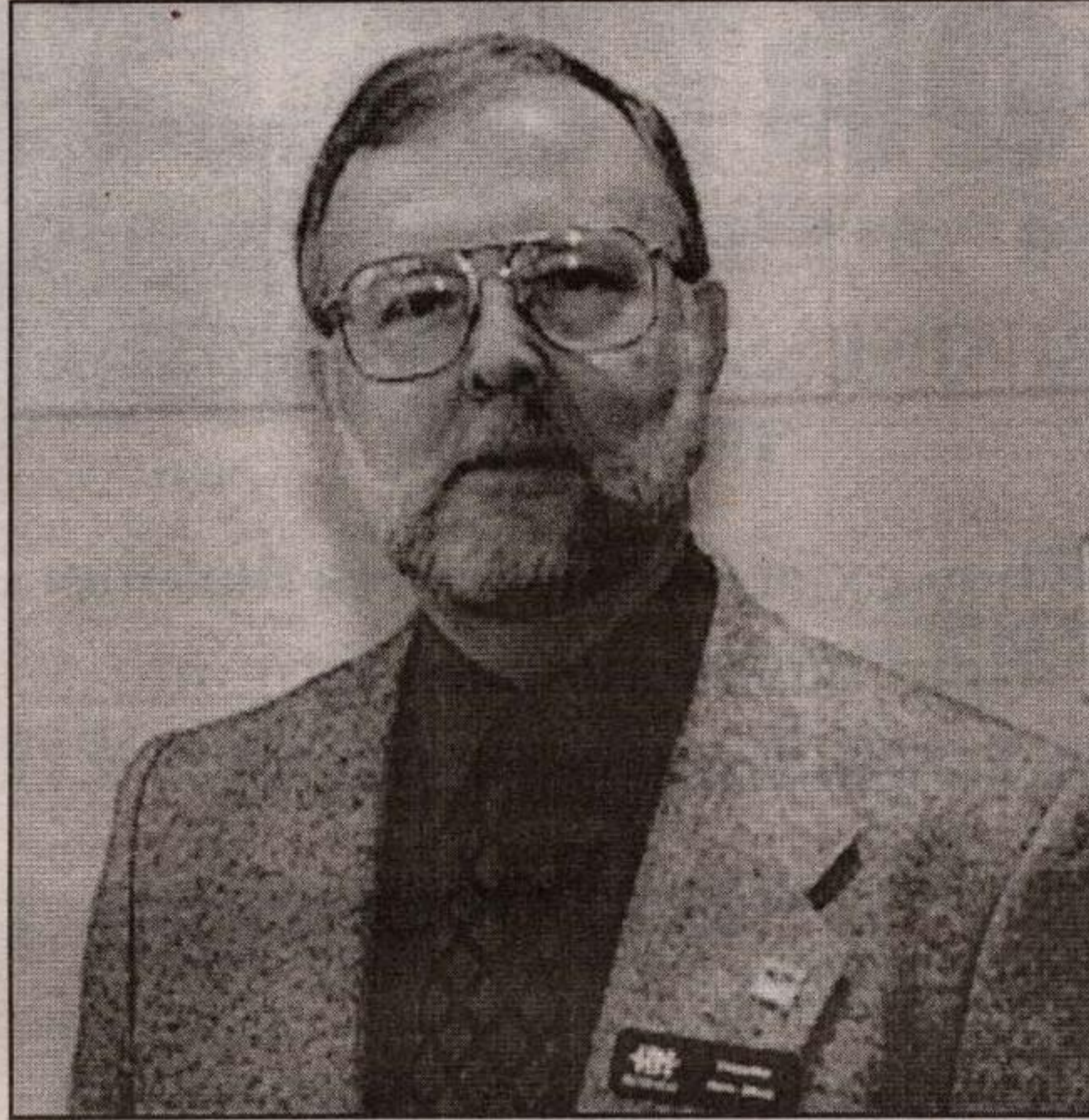
When he can Elliott likes to use local businesses. He does his grocery shopping in Acton and most recently had Lakeview Flooring do some repairs to his bathroom.

"I always like to use local businesses if I can," he says. "It's frustrating to see what's happening in downtown Acton. We need to get residential development to 10,000. A couple of thousand more residents would help our industries and businesses."

Despite a contrary perception by the public, Elliott says Acton councillors have no trouble making their opinion heard and it is both well received and respected. Acton has had a coherent voice at Halton Hills and prior to Clark Somerville's entry, Acton's councillors had served together as a group for 12 years.

"There's a perception in Acton that Acton gets nothing," Elliott says. "But a lot of our town staff live in Acton. If people think those guys would sit back and see Georgetown getting preferential treatment, they're

Councillor Norm Elliott interview



Coun. Norm Elliott

crazy."

Facing the new century Elliott wants to see Acton grow to 10,000 population in order to gain some political clout for the future. Despite dissatisfaction with Regional government, Halton probably functions best of all the regions, he says, and Acton is well served by it. The most positive thing Acton residents can do to preserve their identity is ensure that Halton Hills survives as a separate entity. Were Acton merged into the city of Halton, for instance, its voice would certainly be lost in the majority population to the south.

When it comes to a night out, since his family members are all adults now, they like to go to a club or something of that nature if it's a family outing. But as a couple the Elliotts are movie fans so their nights out tend to be

trips to the movies.

While most politicians have a mentor, Elliott says he can't think of anyone serving that role for him now, probably because he's been on council for so many years.

"I think it's most important to keep an open mind," he says. "You need to be receptive to what all your constituents tell you."

Elliott's biggest surprise upon election to council was the realization of how hard it was to effect change. Not only do you need to influence your fellow councillors, each of whom may have a personal pet project, you need to work within the budget's confines. That leaves very little space to manoeuvre when projects and the dollars to fund them, are already laid out several years in advance, he says.

Apparent inattentiveness

by councillors during meetings is much less serious than outsiders may think, Elliott says. Meetings tend to drag on sometimes and if the delegation is merely presenting information or councillors know the decision has already been made, they may take that time to catch up on other council business. For instance, there is always some new piece of information waiting for them at their council seat. Even though they receive their agenda package on a Friday and go over it attentively, more has always happened by Monday's meeting. While someone is presenting may be an opportune time to scan the new report on their desk.

The biggest accomplishment since his election, Elliott says, is the building of the new Acton arena. The one he found the toughest was to support the building of the new civic centre on Maple Avenue.

As an outsider he couldn't see the benefits to it but in retrospect it's one of council's smartest moves. He wanted to see the centre built on the farm adjacent to the Jehovah's Witness property. After his election however, he learned that property was already sold so council couldn't have chosen it if they wanted to. Now council owns a good chunk of valuable property it can subdivide and develop. Perhaps those proceeds will be sufficient to pay for the Town's proposed new leisure centre.

Elliott sits on the library board so naturally reading is an important occupation for him. The last book he remembers reading was Underworld. He subscribes to both gardening and astronomy magazines and reads them regularly.

The effectiveness of privatizing garbage and blue box service can't be questioned,

Elliott says. What remains at issue is whether these services will continue since they are not paying for themselves.

Elliott agrees the Olde Hide House is probably Acton's biggest booster. Apart from there, however, he suggests visitors should be encouraged to enjoy Acton's small town atmosphere. Repeatedly people say they want to avoid urban sprawl and move to small centres to get away from that.

"Well, Acton is second to none in community spirit. Let them take in the whole community."

He also suggests visitors take in the Blue Springs Golf course since it is one of the prettiest courses in the province.

Getting water to the 401 corridor development is a priority with Elliott.

"You've got to speculate to accumulate," he says. "That (development) is Halton Hills key to the future for industrial assessment. We must get on with servicing there so we can develop it."

Criticism of the speed with which the Town moves on some issues prompts Elliott to agree that there is "always room for improvement". A big part of the problem however, is the Town's lack of staff.

Communities that provide faster service either do less enforcing to ensure compliance with municipal regulations or have more staff to deal with applications. The Town could do with "umpteen more people" but many councillors are not willing to see one more person hired because that will increase Town costs.

Elliott is emphatic in denying any interest in being mayor.

"The mayor's job is one of the most demanding anyone can think about. Anyone who wants it is welcome to it."



Bad Acton experience now shops elsewhere

Dear Editor,

Recently you had a column under letters about four businesses closing. It is always bad to see empty businesses but the Acton one which hurt me most was Sweet Dreams Café (Carmela, Zenga, good friend, ex-worker, and ex-partner). Some one now thinks they are a winner and will do anything to keep a newcomer out of town.

An ex-business owner has now retired and gone.

I would think twice before starting something in Acton. As a customer I would pay \$2 more to save the travel-

ling but I had a bad experience. A small repair job was required in Georgetown so I went to a local shop for the most expensive immediate service but then decided to take it to Acton, hoping the price would be lower. But it cost 15 per cent more for something I had to redo myself and wait three days for and I lost the feeling to return.

I personally prefer to go outside of Acton for shopping where you have a better variety of products and service, parking, and lower prices most of the time.

Claude Morissette

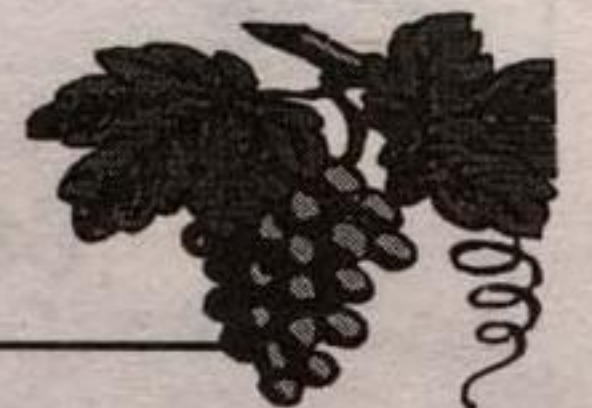
Kids store opens

A new store featuring clothing for children — from newborns to teens — should open within weeks at 5 Mill Street East. Angela Zampirri, daughter of building owner Tony Zampirri of Toronto, started stocking the renovated store earlier this week with reasonable-priced good quality clothing. Tony Zampirri has owned the building, which includes two stores and two apartments, for a decade. He said they decided to open the store after not finding a tenant for his adjoining store that has been vacant for a year.

Calling all Parents

Parents of newborns and children up to six months old are invited to attend a new "baby basics" group, which begins February 17 at the Parent-Child Resource Centre in the Band Hall on Wallace Street.

GRAPEVINE



"Although we operate Calling All Parents — a support and information group — in all other areas of Halton, we haven't had an Acton location until now," said program coordinator Kelly Furmuglia with the Halton Health Department. The program includes guest speakers who will cover a wide range of topics for new parents including child safety and nutrition issues. The program runs Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m. For details call 853-0501.

Bonnette gets nod

Acton and Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette has been elected vice-chair of the powerful Halton Planning

and Public Works committee. Bonnette, who was unanimously elected to the position, has been on the committee for 11 years and just narrowly missed winning the vice-chair seat last year.

Oh, taxi!

Good news for the Acton residents who recently complained they couldn't get a cab in town. Georgetown Taxi has hired a driver for Acton and the taxi will be dispatched from Acton, eliminating the delay and cost of sending a taxi from Georgetown for an Acton call.

Extra eyes

Acton's Community Consultation Committee (CCC) — which acts as an extra pair of eyes for local police, — is looking for new members. The proactive committee meets monthly with local police to discuss local issues of concern.

"The only prerequisite for a CCC member is that they aren't a criminal," said CCC

spokesman Bev Jones, adding they would like to double the number of members. For more details about the Acton CCC call Village Constable Bill Riddle at 853-2050.

Peewee hosts

Acton plays host to the 29th Acton Legion House League and Select Peewee Hockey Tournament this weekend as 24 teams from across the province vie for the championship. It's believed the event is one of the oldest Peewee tournaments in Ontario.

Acton meets Meadowvale at 6:45 p.m. on Friday to kick off play. The Peewee Selects hope to repeat their "B" division championship win of last year. Acton Legion Branch 197 will continue its tradition of feeding the hockey players, families and fans at a tournament breakfast that runs from 8 — 11 a.m. on Sunday at the Legion.

Antics of birds at feeders are a delight to observe

Snow, rain, sleet and plummeting temperatures have made it a hard winter for birds in this area. Natural feeds which the birds enjoyed before winter set in are covered over and they rely more and more on neigh-

bourhood bird feeders.

John Reeve at Leathertown Feeds says the demand for bird feed has doubled since the Christmas season. He says a basic mix of bird feed will attract the small birds such as

chickadees, nuthatches, sparrows and purple finches, who also like niger seed. Blue Jays, those noisy neighbourhood thugs, like sunflower seeds and peanuts in the shell. Those beautiful red cardinals also like sunflower

seeds.

If you've got a good feeder, protected from marauding squirrels, it's a rewarding sight to watch flocks of chattering birds enjoying themselves at the feeder.