

'Embarrassed' over attendance

Acton Councillor Clark Somerville is "embarrassed" by his poor attendance record at monthly Halton Region

Conservation Authority (HRCA) meetings. Somerville, appointed by the mayor as Council's rep on the

Municipal Digest

committee, attended just six of 13 scheduled meetings last year.

"My attendance was poor - I will admit that. I ended up with a lot of conflicts with other items going on the same evenings," Somerville said, explaining a jammed schedule often won't allow him to make it to Burlington in time for the conservation meetings.

"I'm actually quite embarrassed... I didn't realize it was that bad," Somerville said, vowing to improve this year.

Somerville was paid \$323.40 - \$36.50 for each meeting and \$104.40 for gas - by HRCA for sitting as the Town's representative.

Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson made up for Somerville's absences, attending 19 of her 23 scheduled HRCA meetings for which she received \$1,019.90.

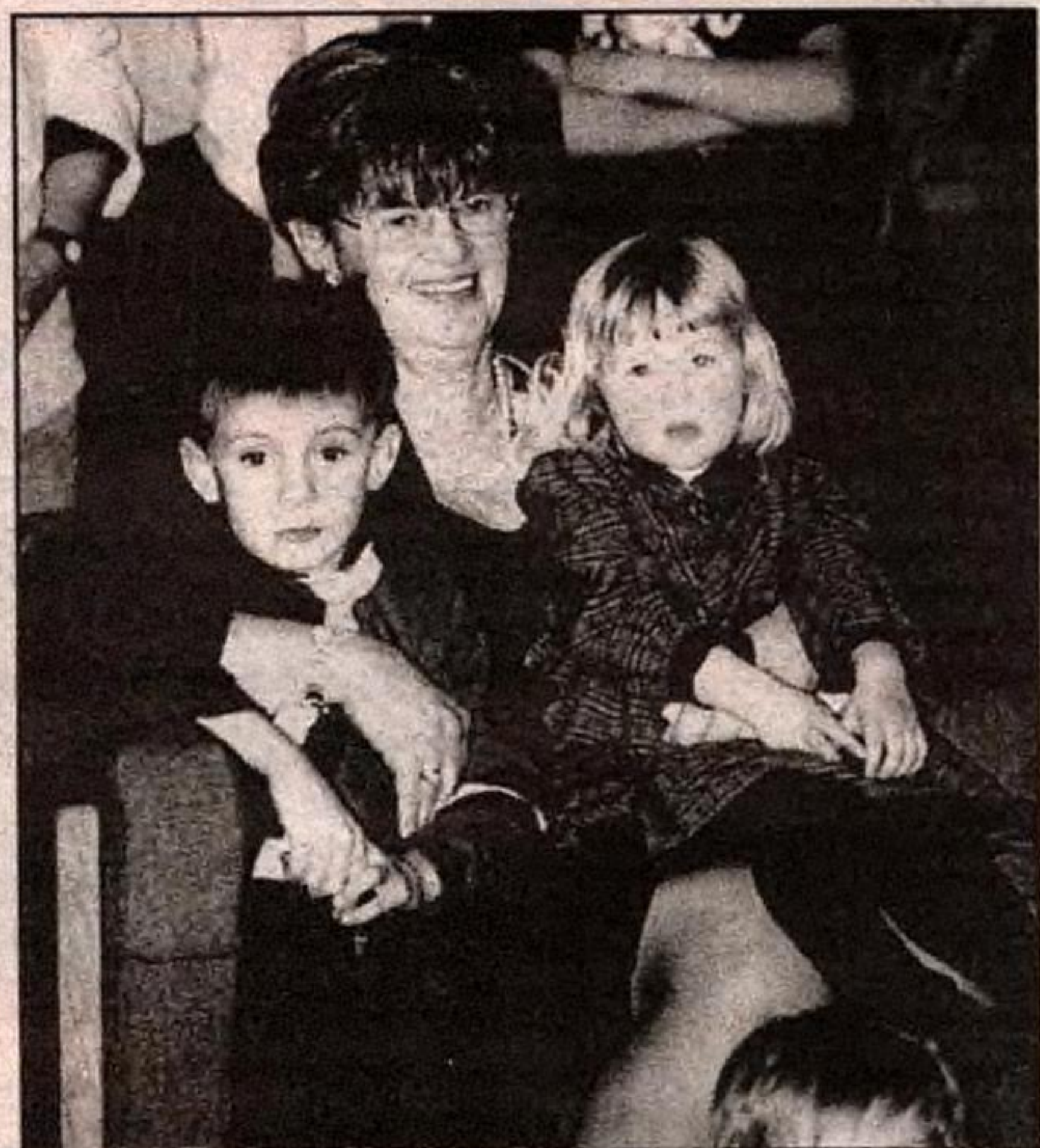
Lots of rural lots

Halton's ban on rural estate subdivisions survived a recent Ontario Municipal Board appeal - five proposed estate lots at Worden View east of Acton were denied - giving some comfort to those who fear urban sprawl.

A Halton rural lot inventory showed the rural area shrinking by 4,811 acres from 1980 to 1996 as the urban area boundaries were stretched and, in some cases, broken.

Halton has a 16-19-year supply of residential lots in rural residential subdivisions. There are 1,139 registered and draft approved lots in Halton and 656 vacant residential lots outside of the hamlets, rural clusters and estate subdivision plans. An average of nine farm lots have been approved annually for retiring farmers in recent years.

In Halton Hills, there are 259 vacant residential rural lots and 408 approved, draft approved and pending applications in rural subdivisions.



FOND FAREWELLS: Retiring Robert Little secretary Joan Parker had her arms full of two of her grandchildren, Brett Moore and Caroline VanDam, who helped her celebrate at her goodbye party last Thursday at the school. - Frances Niblock photo

NOTICE

ANNUAL MEETING Acton Agricultural Society

Annual Meeting to be held on Saturday, January 29, 2000 at Knox Presbyterian Church Hall, Acton commencing at 10:00am for the purpose of receiving the Financial Statements for 1999 and for the election of Officers and Directors.

Daniel Varanelli CGA, CFP
Secretary/Treasurer

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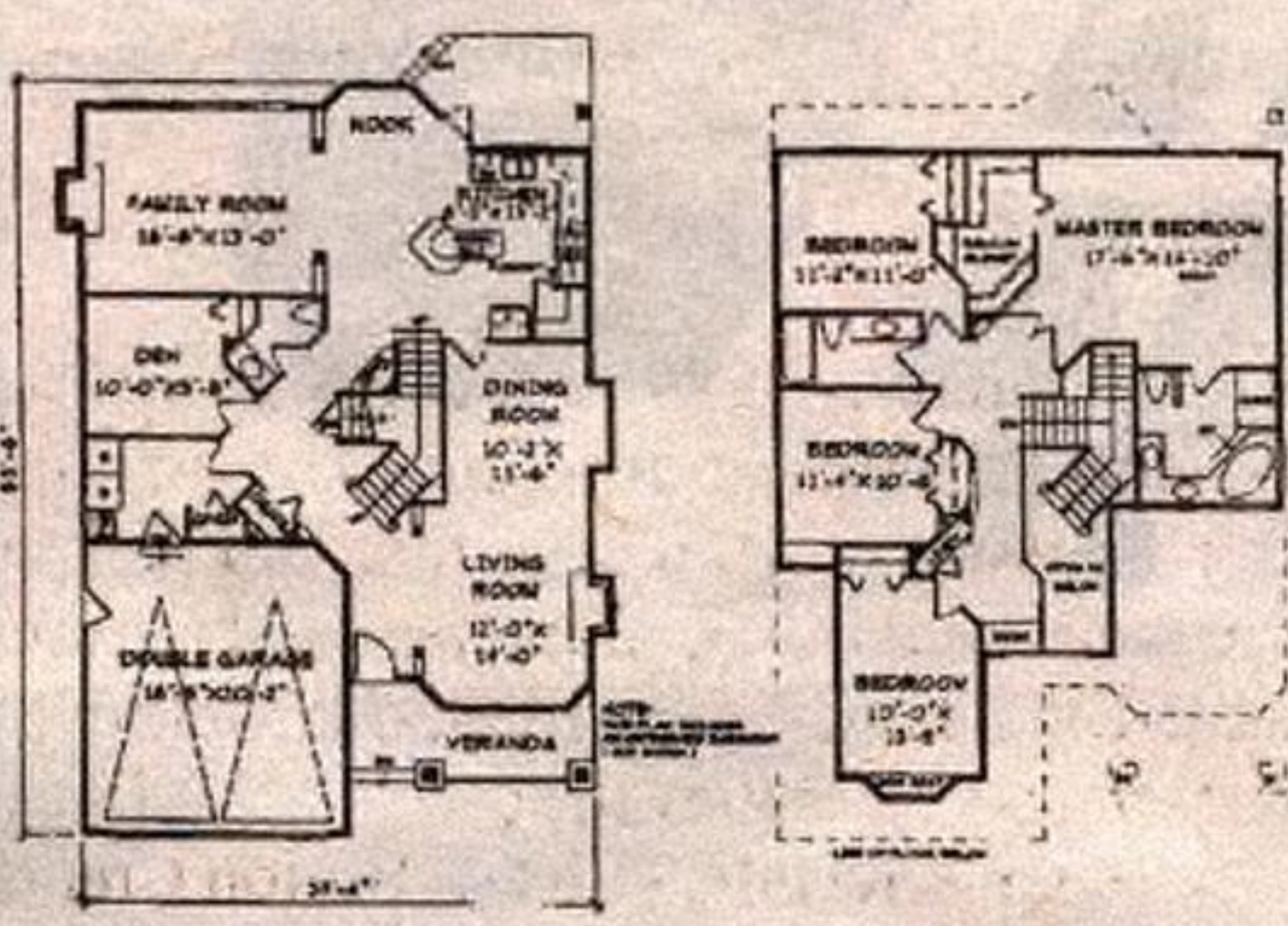
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Town budget...

Continued from Page 1

sions during staff's review. (No doubt Cunningham talked about the need for extra staff to cover shifts and decrease response times in a growing community and cited a decade-old Fire Marshall's report that led to a master plan recommending hiring more firefighters.)

"Since that study was done, call volume in the department has increased by 25 per cent - the population has increased by 29 per cent," Cunningham said.

In his briefing Treasurer Ed DeSousa said increasing revenues and decreasing expenditures resulted in an operating budget requiring \$12.7 to be raised from property taxes.

Attempting to give the figures some perspective, DeSousa said Town taxes, \$717 this year for a property valued at \$185,000, are less than what people pay for phone and cable TV for a year and "people are getting value for their money," including libraries, recreational services, fire prevention and suppression, snow clearing, parks and cemeteries, road maintenance

and others.

The budget committee voted to spend \$70,397 to hire an economic development director to focus increasing the Town's property assessment and growth of employment opportunities. A request from the Halton Hills Library Board to open on Mondays in Georgetown - an annual cost of \$91,000 was rejected by the committee as not affordable this year.

Town administrator Steve Andrews said the Town was going to face huge challenges next year and that if the budget committee wasn't happy with increasing taxes to pay for additional library hours, it could make corresponding budget cuts in other areas. No one made any suggestions for budget cuts.

The operating budget includes a 2 per cent increase for salaries, wages and benefits, \$50,000 towards the anticipated debt for the new leisure centre and twinning of the Alcott arena and a three per cent - or \$300,000 - increase in assessment

The operating budget is slated to be on the February 7 Council agenda for final approval.

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