

Mayor Serjeantson appears uneasy with region meeting

By STEVE LeBLANC
Special to The Independent/Free Press

The distribution of political power is supposed to be the only topic at a Halton regional council meeting Tuesday (May 7). But some councillors probably will try to add other aspects of municipal government to the debate.

At last week's regional council meeting only strong opposition managed to keep other aspects of municipal reform from bubbling into the discussion.

Halton Hills Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson wanted clarifications about where real control will lie at the May 7 meeting.

"In the debate we are supposed to be equal partners, but how could a municipality voice its concerns? Does regional council have the final say? asked Serjeantson. "This should be the first item of discussion. There should be a proper process in place before we start."

Halton Hills council recently adopted a resolution to seek clarification on some issues before providing an official position. Council

wants to know what is meant by equal partners in the process. It also wants details on the voting mechanism to be used in order to confirm that each municipality is an equal partner.

Council also wants clarification on what will be discussed at the special meeting to be held at Halton Region to deal with the issue on May 7. It wants to know if the number of elected officials is to be discussed or if the recommendations contained in the Kitchen Report (on the restructuring of the region) are to be also.



MARILYN SERJEANTSON

Halton Hills council will hold a special council meeting May 6 at 5:30 p.m. at the Civic Centre to discuss the region's resolution on governance and restructuring again.

Burlington mayor Walter Mulkewich, however, appeared frustrated with Serjeantson's calls for

clarity. He said the entire process was agreed upon previously, in a detailed council resolution which underscored that representation would be the first item decided.

"A categorical clarification is untenable," said Oakville mayor Ann Mulvale. "As soon as you give one you will have a debate about what exactly might be meant."

Halton Region has been told by various representatives of the provincial government that if they can fashion a plan for local municipal reform which is tenable to the province, it will be accepted.

Some local and regional councillors have suggested that in order to determine the distribution of representation, debate on what role a new Halton would fill is inevitable.

On Tuesday the four municipalities in Halton will either forge a new alliance or begin the process which will sweep them into the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), according to many area politicians.

Currently Burlington has nine regional council seats, Oakville seven, Halton Hills five and Milton three.

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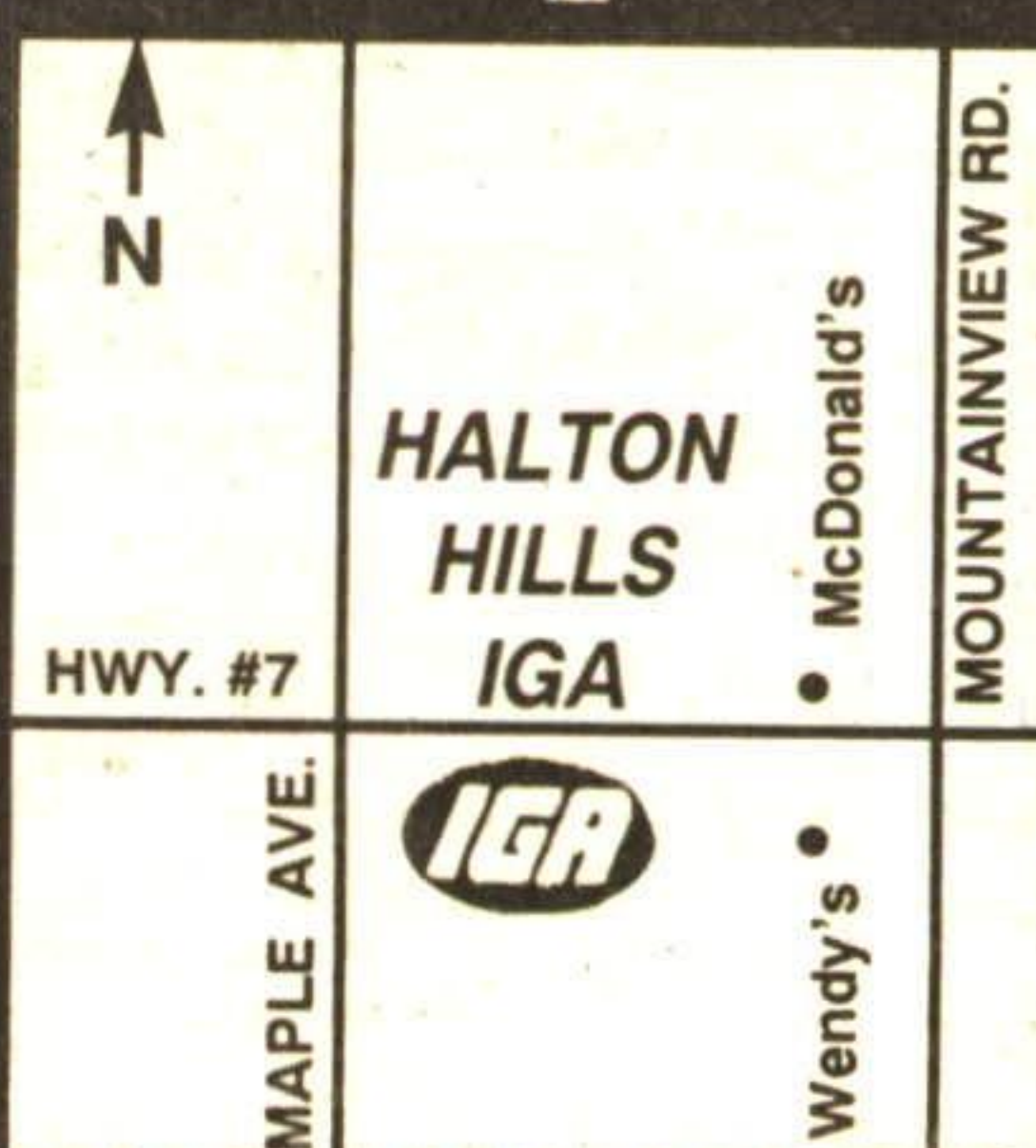
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Hydro continues cost cutting trend

Halton Hills Hydro has continued a trend to cut costs and upgrade services over the past year. The financial statements for 1995 were presented and approved at the hydro meeting last month. The administration cost has dropped from \$240 to \$180 per customer over the past three years, excluding the cost of hydro, said general manager Dave Collie. These administrative costs used to be higher than average in Ontario, but they are now equal to the average, he added.

"We're now servicing 12 per cent more customers with 15 per cent less staff. Efficiency is up 27 per cent," Collie said.

This year's net income was down to \$1.1 million from \$1.65 million last year, due to a 2 per cent cut in hydro rates. "We're exactly where we figured we would be, but we did even better, because there were \$100,000 in unplanned costs," Collie said.

Storm damage last April cost about \$50,000 and the other \$50,000 unanticipated expense was due to a substation failure on Armstrong Ave., which required costs for equipment rental.

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