

Veteran Acton councillor will be missed, say peers

After 15 years as a strong voice for Acton at the Halton Hills council table, Norm Elliott is retiring from municipal politics.

Elliott, 56, who announced his intention to retire back in June, plans to spend more time with his family, at his job (he's an insurance broker in Georgetown), and enjoying astronomy and other hobbies.

"It sure wasn't a snap decision," said Elliott. "I really do have mixed emotions."

"It's impossible to balance the demands of my job and the ever-increasing demands of being a councillor in Halton Hills," he said in June.

Over the years Elliott, who also served as an Acton councillor from 1970 to 1973, has dealt with a wide range of issues including the Reclamation Systems Inc. proposal to put a

landfill in the Acton quarry, the Acton arena, development in Acton that led to a lengthy OMB hearing, and the Equity Waste Management application which resulted in he and other councillors being named in a lawsuit.

Elliott said seeing the new Acton Arena and Community Centre built has been the most rewarding moment for him, particularly after "all the years of criticism and public outrage for not getting the job done."

"We fought for years to get the Acton arena. Until we had a council that was supportive, nothing would have happened," Elliott said.

He said, in the end, the arena was even better than anticipated.

The "mind-numbing frustration of dealing with mainly provincial bureaucracy" on the Acton development issue proved to be most frustrating for the veteran councillor. He

regrets he won't be on council when the long-awaited development in Acton begins, which he says is right around the corner.

He said being a councillor, for the most part, is "extremely frustrating work for anybody."

"The needs far exceed the wherewithal to provide them."

Elliott said the councillors from Acton he worked with over the years (he, Rick Bonnette, Gerald Rennie, and Clark Somerville) worked well together.

"No ward worked better. If we knew there was an objective that needed to be reached, we tried to do that," he said.

Elliott will be missed by his colleagues.



NORM ELLIOTT

"He is wise beyond his years," said Wards 1/2 Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette, who has known Elliott for years. "When he first got elected he already knew the job."

"He was a fighter for Acton but also gave that balance of a Halton Hills perspective," said Bonnette.

"We are going to miss his wisdom and his thoughtfulness in how he approached the problems we had to deal with," said outgoing Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson, who also stressed Elliott's love for Acton.

Over the years Elliott has also sat on the Halton Hills Library Board, Heritage Halton Hills, Credit Valley Conservation, the town's interview, fire review, hydro restructuring and seniors' advisory committees. He plans to step down from all of his committee work at the end of this year but he will continue to

run the town's astronomy program which is offered twice a year. Astronomy has been a favorite hobby of his since he was a boy.

Elliott said the new council, headed by mayor-elect Kathy Gastle, will face challenges in the coming term.

Maintaining a "smooth transition politically" is one thing that will have to be resolved and as it does its Official Plan review council will have to grapple with "how to protect Halton Hills from this unbelievable sprawl" at the town's borders he said. Amalgamation could also be an issue.

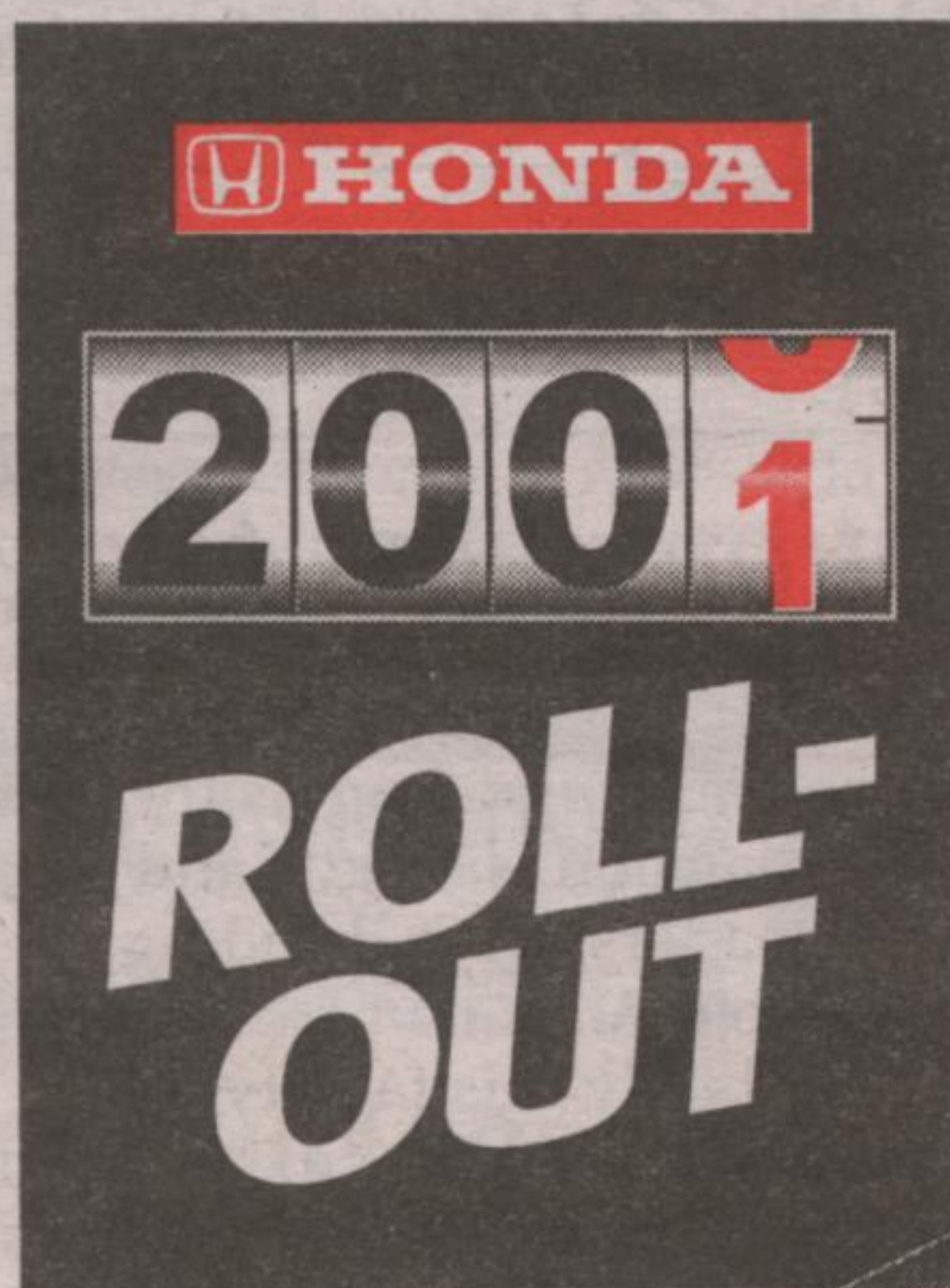
While he would have liked to have had his say on those matters, Elliott said regardless of when he decided to retire there would always be a municipal issue to deal with.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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