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Public mum on name change until March

The public won't get their chance to state their opinions on the renaming of Acton and Norval streets until next March.

Council approved a report last week setting March 3, 2004 as the date for the public meeting on the proposed renaming of Mary St., George St. and Arthur St. in Norval and Park Ave. and Main St. N. and S. in Acton.

The name change is the recommended option to deal with duplicate addresses in the Town of Halton Hills that is interfering with the 911 emergency service.

The problem has been created across Ontario with the amalgamation of municipalities (in this case, Georgetown, Acton and the Township of Esquering into the Town of Halton Hills) and the usage of the same street names and numbers in the amalgamated communities.

After viewing a list of options, such as using a different range of numbers, changing the street suffix (Ave. to St.), directional identifier (north or south), the town's Duplicate Addressing Committee agreed that a street name change was the best option. It would eliminate any public safety risk, potential liability to the town and supported the emergency services' efforts to have quick response times.

Keith Moore, senior planner with Halton Regional Police, agreed with the committee's decision. He told council that "we're in the business of life safety" and a name change would be the best option to ensure a good response time. He pointed out the issue is a result of changes to the 911 technology and is not solely a Town of Halton Hills problem.

Also supporting that view was Greg Sage, ambulance planner. He said ambulance calls come into a central dispatch responsible for Halton, Peel and York Region and "duplicate

street names take on an increased urgency from our perspective."

There is strong opposition by Acton residents to the name changes because they believe Park and Main Sts. reflect their community's heritage. Some say that Acton and Georgetown are separate towns, not one (Halton Hills); the number of people affected (less in Acton than in Georgetown) should not be used as the only criteria, street names should change in Georgetown too, and Bell should have the technology to deal with this (Bell doesn't, the committee says).

The committee has recommended that Mary St. in Norval be changed to L.M. Montgomery Lane. No residents objected to this proposal. Four residents objected to the proposed closing of Arthur St. in Norval but had no objection to a renaming.

The committee assessed costs of name changes and reported residents would have none—Canada Post has agreed to waive its redirect charge for six months. It would be more of a matter of inconvenience—similar to a move—of notifying businesses, utilities, friends and family of the address change.

Acton Councillor Clark Somerville motioned to have all residents who have commented so far on the issue to receive mailed notice of the public meeting.

Wards 1 & 2 Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette, a vocal opponent of the name change option, objected to wording in the report's recommendation calling the option 'proposed'. He said that makes it sound as though it's 'fait accompli' and he didn't agree with that viewpoint.

The public meeting will be followed by a report to council in April with recommended options. If the name changes are accepted, the town will move to a name selection stage.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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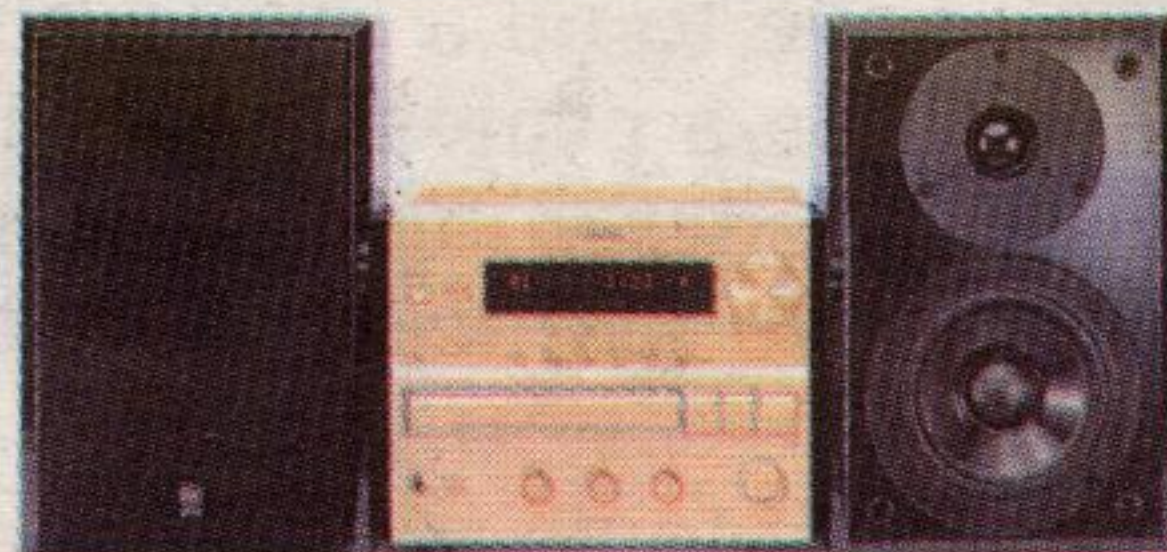
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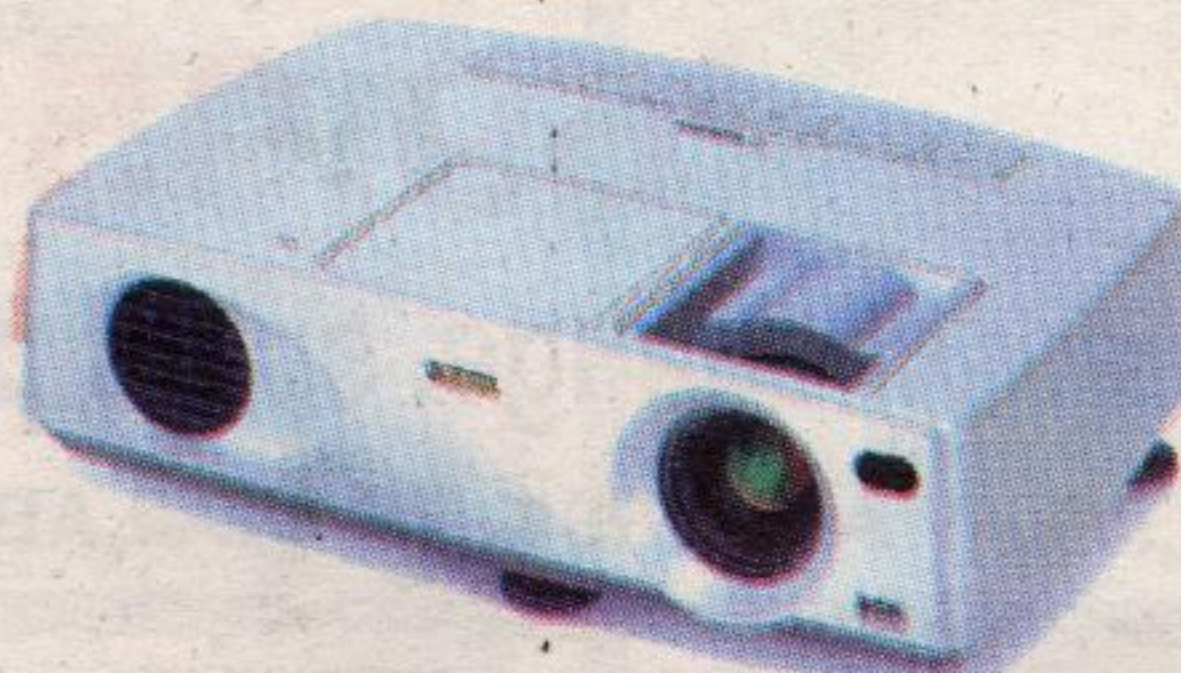
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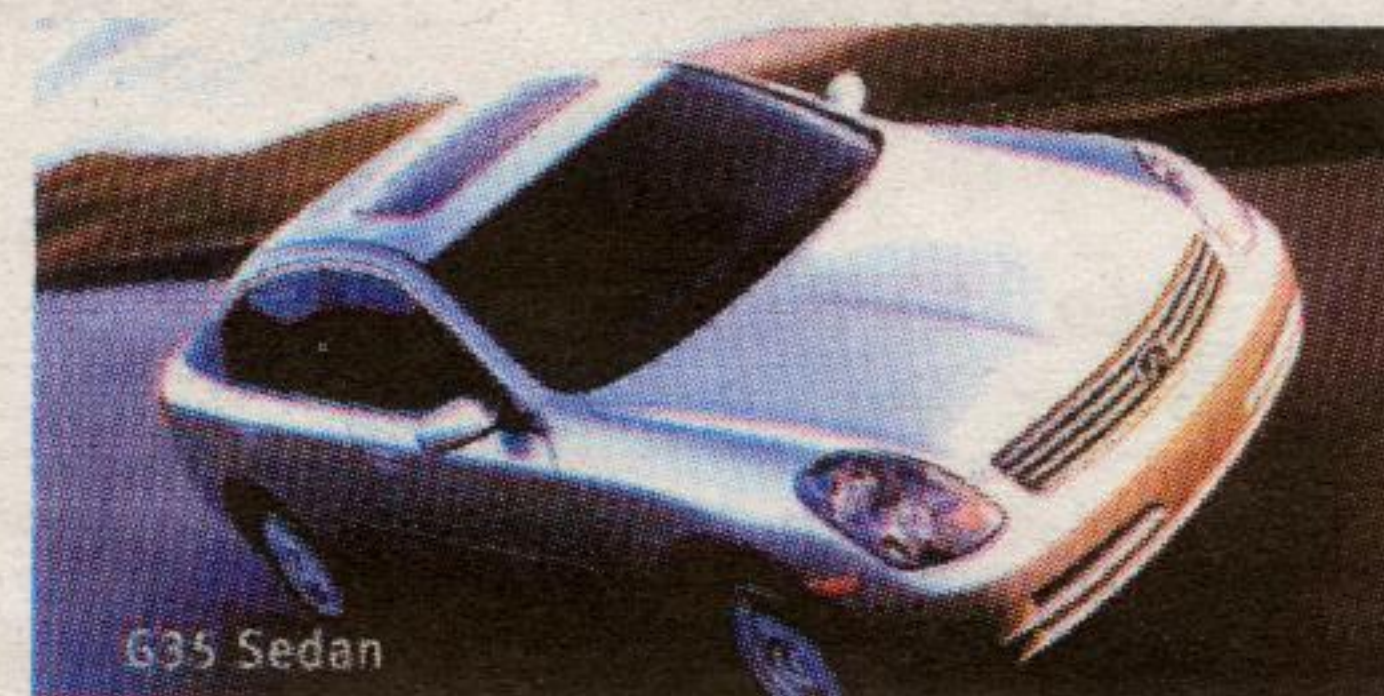
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