

# Others' opinions on Plunkett report

## A vote for Plunkett

(From the Daily Journal-Record, Oakville)

Aside from being a positive blueprint showing the way to regional government for the Halton-Peel area, the Plunkett report issued this week is equally significant in that it ends an unfair tradition which has allowed the rural communities to feed off the plate of the neighboring urban centres.

Under the existing structure of local government it has been a case of urban units like Oakville paying the way at the county level, while the rural areas ride for free. This has resulted from the urban centre being forced by law to contribute heavily toward the county council budget, although rural representatives have pretty much held the voting power, the control.

The system is a holdover from a by-gone era, from the days of rural Ontario when provincial politicians went far out of their way to please the farmer. That the county system is outdated is made clear in the Plunkett report which notes:

"The basic powers and responsibility of the county were set out in the Act of 1849 and in the intervening 116 years these have not been altered substantially."

The new two-region split proposed in the Halton-Peel study report is designed to put the urban centres in full charge of their own affairs and, most importantly, of their own monies. It puts the rural areas on their own, by bringing these centres under the proposed rural county of Halton-Peel.

Basically the two-county split outlined by Plunkett knocks the bad points out of the existing county system. Going further, however, the report makes a strong case for regional government by also showing the overdue need for a sweeping renovation of the hometown government structure in Halton and Peel.

Thomas Plunkett, commissioner for the Halton-Peel study, emphasized that the day of the "local community" in the sense of what it once was, no longer really exists in this area.

There can be little doubt that regions like Halton and Peel are over-governed and some form of centralized control, as proposed by Plunkett, could bring much uniformity and efficiency to future development and to the taxpayer.

The main roadblock in the way of rationalization of local government, of course has been local autonomy, with its myriad of local politicians and their pride and possession of a myriad of local authorities.

But the fact so many local-level groups and municipal bodies proposed some type of remaking of the existing structure in briefs to Plunkett is evidence that even the hometown politicians are willing to accept that reformation is in order . . . and overdue.

The threat that a regional government concept may pose to "local identity" is also a roadblock, although one which is more myth than fact. The Plunkett report said that the loss of the present local government structure may lead some to the conclusion that points of identification will also disappear. Such is not the case. Further, it is fact that names such as Oakville, Burlington, Brampton, Bramalea, Port Credit, Cooksville, Milton, Acton, etc., will still be used as means of identifying where one lives, while at the same time the residents of these "units" will be reaping the benefits of regional government.

Ironically, one of the very real "benefits" from a unified region could turn out to be the added protection against the danger of large parts of Halton and Peel being swallowed up by the two vast city areas on the east and west . . . thereby completely and totally eliminating identification. Regional setups such as the proposed urban county of Mississauga would prove a much greater stumbling block to the Metro Monster vis-a-vis what now exists.

The Plunkett report has conjured up a dazzling vision of the future of the Halton-Peel region — two large centres, one urban and the other rural. The report is an imaginative design and shows thoughtful work on the part of Thomas Plunkett as he eliminates some of the incompatibility and inequity of today's structure by dividing the region rural and urban. The Halton-Peel study includes its share of controversial proposals. But as a general pattern for future government the report is admirable.

## Area is too big

From the editorial page column, "Random Thoughts, by Benjamin B. Buckboard," in The Burlington Gazette.

Well Monsieur Plunkett has "dood" it. He came out with a plan that did not satisfy everyone. He made the great mistake of not asking 3 per cent Lester to be on his team.

His report as finally presented last week had many things in its favor. The idea of splitting the urban area away from the rural northern parts of the Counties had a lot of merit. The idea of only one plateau of government is very sound. You have heard old Ben talk of the cost of government before, so maybe there is hope yet. Even Honest John may retire, but don't hold your breath.

However, Ben believes the total area involved in Mr. Plunkett's report is too great. Perhaps Toronto Township, by the water, and the lower parts of both Oakville and Burlington would be sufficient. They have a lot in common. Overall, Ben is satisfied with the report's basic analysis of this general area and the problems facing the rapid future growth.

Ben does not agree with Mayor Berryman and Mayor Copps that Burlington's future is directly involved with the City of Hamilton.

Can you just imagine the pandemonium in this area if negotiations proceeded on a regional basis like those of LaSalle Park and the Sewage Treatment Plant of the Burlington Beach?

You will recall that the City of Hamilton appealed to the OMB against Burlington building this needed plant. The City of Hamilton has never given an inch in negotiation concerning LaSalle Park, and it just seems to sit there like a big white elephant.

## Study and hospitals

(From the Daily Journal-Record, Oakville)

The Halton-Peel regional government report is far-reaching and wide-ranging in its proposals. Not overlooked is the problem of operating the community hospitals located within the two-county area.

The Halton-Peel report, on page 61, deals with the matter of financing new hospital construction. The report notes in part: "It is clear that if hospital-bed expansion is to keep abreast of the needs generated by urban growth the hospitals will have to be assured of some measure of stability with respect to the financial participation of all levels of government."

This newspaper shares the Halton-Peel report's obvious concern over the lack of stable financing for community hospital building. An editorial published in this newspaper on April 30 (Hospital Financing) expressed the opinion the traditional business of begging money from door-to-door is no longer an acceptable way to help finance the construction of community hospitals . . . particularly in areas of urban growth like our own.

As indicated in the Halton-Peel study a more efficient, reliable and economical way must be found to provide a need so fundamental to the health and well-being of our citizens. And this new method of financing must involve "all levels of government."

This paper believes if we are ever going to match the pace of hospital building with the growing need, hospitals will have to be financed out of taxes. It is a belief not out of step with the Halton-Peel report which says:

"Insofar as the financial responsibility of the proposed County of Mississauga is concerned this (hospital financial) should be confined to a specified proportion of construction costs. In this connection an interesting formula is outlined in a brief submitted by the Committee of General Hospitals of Halton and Peel counties, whereby hospital construction costs would be met by way of a fixed allocation from municipal, provincial and federal governments."

Only by this "fixed allocation" method through taxation can the public be assured, not only that our present needs are met, but that hospital construction keeps up with out expanding population.

Along with fixed financing for hospital building is the need for the establishment of a regional hospital council. Such a body would look after the interests of the region as a whole, not just of any particular community. A regional council would rule out costly and unneeded duplication in hospital facilities, services, and administration.

That co-operative endeavors can decrease hospital costs has been proven in other areas. With areas within the proposed County of Mississauga now talking about future hospital needs (Oakville being one) it would be timely to begin taking up the regional hospital council concept.

## Adopt it quickly

(From The Beaver, Oakville)

The Peel-Halton Local Government Review conducted by special commissioner Thomas J. Plunkett may endanger Oakville's autonomy, but will certainly help to retain our identity in the light of being swallowed up by the Metro-monster.

And if Mr. Plunkett's recommendations are followed up it is a certainty that we've got the monster by the tail.

It must be realized that regional government is our only salvation in keeping up with progress.

The consolidation of municipal forces in one county government does not only cut expenses on the local level, but more important, it is the only way of establishing coordination.

It cut out political hanky panky, it ensures a higher calibre of administrative employees. It does away with many of the boards and commissions and committees, which is one way of cutting down on a lot of red tape.

The consolidation as it applies to the Lakeshore communities is even more important because each of these municipalities suffers from the same setbacks.

By co-ordination of a movement to build up a progressive county system the common problems will become one, and will be dealt with through one administrative body.

Though the Plunkett recommendations are far from being a reality and though they will be tossed around on the municipal and provincial levels for some time, they are without doubt, a step in the right direction.

Neither is there any doubt that at least part, if not in its entirety, the Plunkett report should be adopted as soon as possible.

## What's all the hurry?

(From The Bolton Enterprise)

The report by Thomas J. Plunkett, the consultant retained by the Ontario government recommending the dissolution of boundaries in Peel and Halton counties, intimates that municipal

## Must make sure windows are clear

Finding frost on the windows of your car these mornings??? Better make sure you clear it off before you start driving.

Effective October 1, it is an offence in Ontario to drive a motor vehicle on the highway unless the windshield, windows on either side of the driver and the rear window provide a clear view of the roadway and vehicles approaching from either direction. The provision respecting the rear window does not apply where the motor vehicle is equipped with a mirror securely attached to the vehicle in a position to give the driver a clear view of the roadway, in the rear, other than through the rear window.

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autonomy is archaic and obstructive when it prevents progress in administration of our changing region.

We believe that all levels of government need over-hauling, starting at the Federal and Provincial end, ending with the county. We have always thought our municipal councils gave us the best return for our tax dollar. So we are not prepared to subscribe to change for the sake of change until the whole matter is more fully understood.

It is understandable that officials in Peel and Halton are objecting to the proposed amalgamation. Some are passing out judgment showing immaturity and a lack of careful study of the plan.

The Hon. Wilfred Spooner of the Ontario government who took the wrappers off Plunkett's Report, placed a limit of Dec. 31, 1966, as the terminating date to register objections to the proposals. We suggest this is not enough time for the people of Peel and Halton to evaluate such a scheme. Further it is the public who should make such a far-reaching decision, not the elected officials. Yes, the last word should come from the people.

A number of public meetings should be called and the reasons for abandoning our municipal system and boundaries advanced and carefully discussed. In fact the main weakness to the report is we haven't heard enough from Mr. Plunkett. It would be appropriate to have him speak in defence of his plan at the "grass roots level". The already harassed taxpayer will want to know what this thing is going to do to his tax-bill?

## Must consider changes

(Excerpts from an editorial in The Acton Free Press, Acton)

The release of T. J. Plunkett's Peel-Halton Local Government Review by the Minister of Municipal Affairs has generated widely divergent opinions by the "politicians" of the area. From the views expressed last Thursday evening even before the report has been published it was quite evident the crying towels were going to be needed in great quantity. When the report was in these "politicians'" hands they were not long in jumping into public print with their condemnations of its recommendations and their suggestion by inference, the lack of potential qualifications of the author.

We were pleased to note that the elected representatives of this area exercised a good deal of intelligence and were not stampeded into comment on the report before taking the time to thoroughly read and digest its contents.

That there will be change in the structures and methods of

local government is inevitable. The basic powers and responsibilities of the county were set out in The Municipal Act in 1849 and in the intervening years have not been altered substantially. While there have been some modifications and amendments, the basic responsibilities have not been changed although in some cases they have been extended.

Since 1849 every business and every citizen's way of life has vastly changed through increased knowledge gained from experience. To suggest that in the intervening 116 years we have not gained in knowledge, sufficiently to devise a better form of local government, in keeping with today's requirements, to us is depressing. If all the accumulated experience of this period has not prepared us to devise a more efficient form of government than that which was required in 1849, then we had better get back in the buggy whip and square nail businesses.

The fact that the study was instituted in the first place, and the minister's request that written comment on it be submitted by December 31, 1966, indicates there will be changes in local government in Peel and Halton. We are prepared to support in principle the establishment of a regional type of government in this area. We believe that the people of the area will accept and endorse any change that will provide a more practical and efficient form of local administration.

We do have some reservation, as we are sure many others have, in the detail and methods suggested by Mr. Plunkett.

It would appear to us that there has not been enough consideration given the boundaries of Peel-Halton. On the south boundary we have Milton as a projection in Mississauga. Any growth through annexation in Milton would involve intermunicipal negotiations which would undoubtedly be very involved. No consideration has been given the area of influence exerted by Milton as an economic force on its surrounding district. It would appear to us that Mr. Plunkett has been unduly concerned with the retention of the present northern boundaries of Burlington and Oakville.

Two alternatives present themselves. The first would naturally be to extend the southern boundary into Burlington and Oakville in relation to Milton's area of influence. The second alternative would be to move the southern Peel-Halton boundary north to 401 highway and include Milton in Mississauga County.

A similar situation is evident on Peel-Halton's northern boundary. Where Mr. Plunkett's area of study was confined to Halton's northern boundary, Acton's area of influence extends north to encompass a portion of the present Wellington County which could conceivably be added to the proposed Peel-Halton.

(Continued on Page B3)

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