

Mayor explains town financing

North Burlington residents got a quick lesson in economics and the cost of running their town Thursday, when the mayor of Burlington George Harrington was guest speaker at the annual meeting of Upper Burlington Citizens Forum. Mayor Harrington chose to refrain from commenting on the controversial new official plan for the north of the town, because it is still under study by the planning board, but he outlined the town's financial picture to the small crowd attending.

"I believe there are some misunderstandings among the people who live in the rural area on where their taxes are spent," he opened. He refused to refer to areas of the town as "north" and "south" but said the councillors try to think of the town as one—"we try to think collectively rather than separately."

Where it goes
This year it's a \$26 million budget, of which \$18 million comes from the taxpayers by direct taxation, said the mayor. Grants and other revenues make up the difference. Largest share of the tax dollar goes to education—40 per cent or \$7 million. Of the balance, 28 per cent goes to public works (\$7,363,000) while 10 per cent looks after debt charges, 11 per cent police and fire service, 11 per cent recreation and community services, six per cent (\$1.5 million) is paid to the County of Halton and one per cent goes to conservation.

Mayor Harrington said that although the public works department is a big spender, many of the projects are done out of current funds to save financing charges. This year 11.3 mills are set aside from current revenue for capital purposes.

The "pay as you go" policy is working well, he said. If a major crisis came up, the town could revert to debenturing such work and cut those mills off the current tax rates.

Police, fire cost
Police and fire cost close to \$3 million. There are 71 men in the police department, 55 full time at three stations in the fire department.

Recreation is "a big item" the mayor admitted, but with 22 per cent of the town's population attending school, recreation for young people is a necessary expense. Adults are seeking more and more in recreational facilities too, he added.

Referring to industrial promotion in Burlington, he noted industry doesn't get any tax concessions from the town but the town does provide serviced industrial land for a set price of \$10,000 an acre plus a good industrial climate. It takes a lot of industry and commercial assessment to balance off the residential assessment, he noted, and pointed out that the taxes on most residential properties don't even cover the cost of education. This year it costs \$282 to educate an elementary school child for a year and \$476 to educate a secondary school student.

The differential in the mill rate between urban and rural areas is 10.2 mills this year, the mayor noted. He emphasized rural ratepayers are not paying for services in the urban area, except on a few items (such as bus service) which is ruled by provincial laws.

Eight per cent
There is \$16,803,121 assessment in the rural area of Burlington this year, just eight per cent of the town's total. Revenue to the town, excluding education, is \$694,000.

Mayor Harrington said he endorsed the idea of ratepayers' associations like the UBCF, although he didn't like special case bodies which have only one point of view and are only formed to campaign for one thing. "I think it would be good if this organization took more time to come downtown, sit around the table and discuss things," he said. Communication between the elected representatives and the rural people has always been a problem but better communication would result in a better understanding, he concluded.

In the question period which followed, ratepayers queried assessment differentials with neighboring communities and a private legislative bill to drop costs of urban bus service to rural ratepayers was discussed. But the mayor warned Forum members they should not demand exclusion from the bus subsidy costs, or the town might make them pay for all the services they receive and it could cost more in the end. "I wouldn't be in a hurry to nail down your costs," he said.

Sunday drivers
Complaints were also voiced about the growing traffic on north and roads and the "Sunday driver" and "weekend jaunter" were cited. "If we are going to

take all your Sunday drivers we should be getting more concessions, because they are a darn nuisance," Ben Hitchcock of Guelph Line told the mayor. He said in the past five or six years there have been over 100 accidents on the winding stretch north of 10 Sideroad. The Mayor said it was a county road and not Burlington's responsibility. Others in the audience

complained about heavy weekend traffic in the rural north. Mrs. S. Portch thanked the mayor for taking time to come to the meeting.

Councillor Mrs. Ella Foote, who represents Ward Three on Burlington Council, added her thanks and noted the mayor puts in 15 hours a day or more on town business.

Survey called "stupid" Poor turnout at Forum's annual

Attendance was sparse but interest was high Thursday when Upper Burlington Citizens Forum's annual meeting conflicted with the final game of the NHL championship. The NHL game drew the Forum meeting as only 19 members and interested ratepayers from north Burlington attended. Vice-chairman G. Bradford Clements, who chaired the meeting, said he was sorry the attendance wasn't larger. He said there were 802 families who live north of Highway 5 who are eligible for membership, but only 16 had paid dues last year. A membership campaign is planned, "to make sure we are a good representative voice."

Name directors
The meeting elected 11 directors who will guide the UBCF in 1972 and they will meet later to select a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer from among the directors. Named as directors are Brock Harris, G. B. Clements, Ross Segsworth, Tom Ballm, Harold Middlebrook, Mrs. S. Portch, Mrs. L. Morris, Miss L. Scotchmer, Mrs. Parent, Mrs. Ann Rudge and Bruce Tomlinson.

Reviewing the past year, chairman Clements noted there were several public meetings and numerous executive meetings. The group helped the town with the spring clean-up in May and held a meet-the-candidates night for provincial election candidates last fall.

The Forum has been active in the campaign to review mailing addresses and telephone areas in the north Burlington area in the past year. Officials were hoping for a report from Bell Canada on the possibility of changing some phone areas, but it was learned the Bell report will not be available until June. A survey was carried out on mailing addresses but Councillor Mrs. Ella Foote fears it will be pretty useless—the town staff which

prepared the survey cards omitted a place for people to sign their name and address.

131 ask change
Director Ross Segsworth said the survey was "stupid" because if people wrote in saying they wanted a change in their mailing address, the town wouldn't know where they lived. "It would have been better to give the money to the Salvation Army," he said, "it's absolutely useless."

To date there have been 520 replies from the 802 surveys mailed, and 389 indicated they don't want a change in address while 131 indicate they do. The 300 who didn't reply are probably satisfied with their mail address, chairman Clements felt.

Treasurer Tom Ballm gave a "cheerful" financial report showing the Forum has a \$61.68 bank balance.

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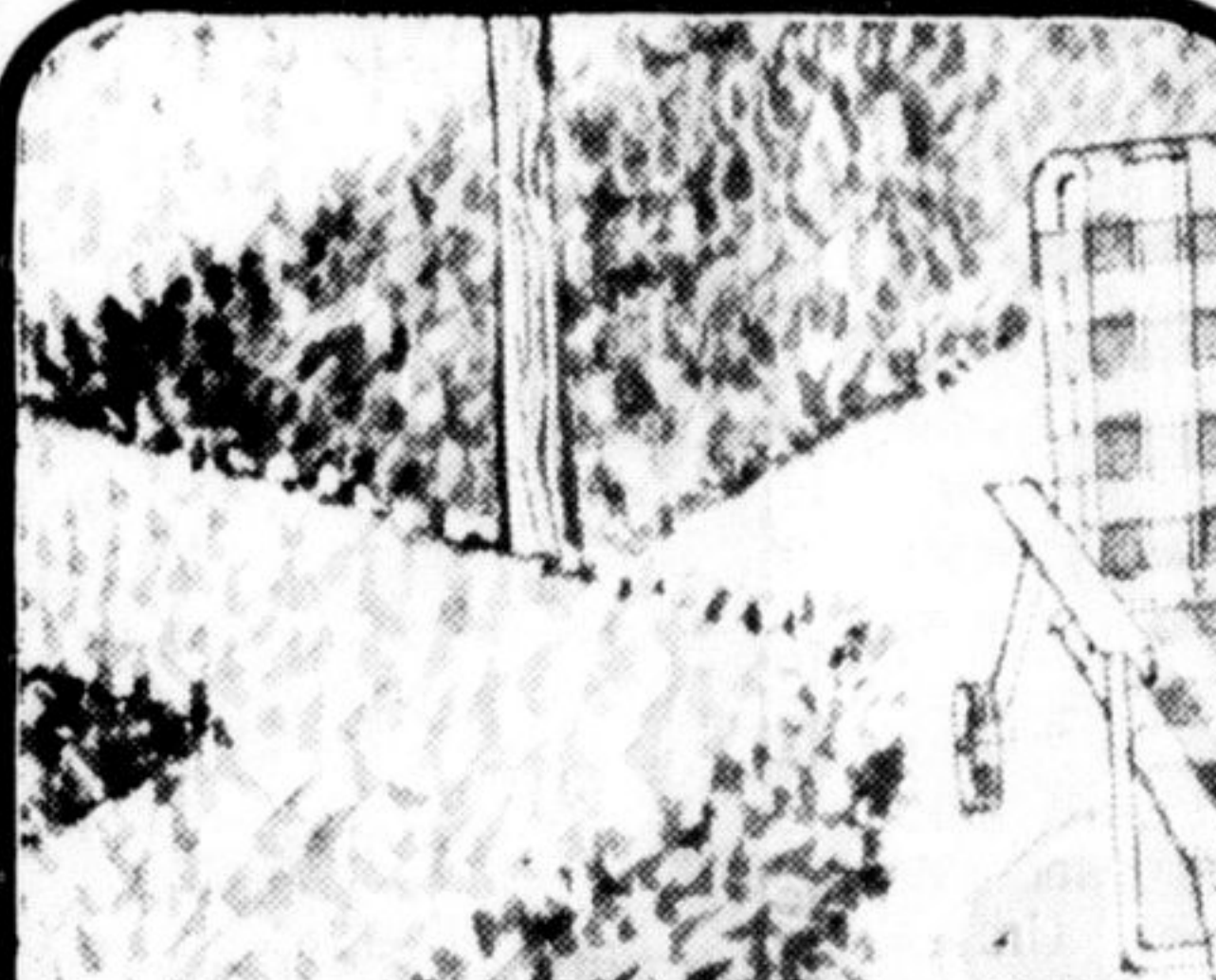
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