

Morrow: we must get back to reflecting views of the people

Region photos, stories by Bob Burt

If newly elected Regional Chairman Ric Morrow achieves one of his goals there will be "a little less politics and a little more business" around Halton regional headquarters during the next two years.

Mr. Morrow said time and time again during a press conference Wednesday that he would keep a low public profile.

He said he would not attend public functions other than those specifically regional in nature. Mr. Morrow claimed that the regional chairman's attendance at functions in the

municipality detracted from the dignity and authority of the mayor. "There seems to be more weight on the regional chairman's office than is necessary or proper," he said.

Mr. Morrow's attitude toward public functions seems to be typical of the posture he plans to take as regional chairman and the role he sees the regional level of government playing in Halton.

According to Mr. Morrow, the regional chairman's job is not the job of a "super mayor". He scoffed at the

idea of the regional council being a step up and a step more powerful than area councils, but preferred to think of the region as being on a par or equal with the four area councils.

Mr. Morrow told reporters that he is a supporter of regional government but his answers on most questions indicated that the region wouldn't be swelling in size or authority under his chairmanship.

"I want to redefine the role of the chairman's office and reduce it in authority and status. I want to slow down the expansion of the office itself and the region."

For his part, Mr. Morrow will be a part time chairman, keeping his job as a pilot with a commercial airline.

His predecessor Allan Masson was active with the Association of Counties and Regions, and attended regularly at meetings of the Provincial-Municipal Liaison Committee among other provincial bodies.

According to Morrow, that won't be part of his job. That, like the public functions, will go by the board and if council wants a chairman at those types of things, they'll have to look for a new man.

Mr. Morrow told reporters he sees his priority in terms of time commitment as being with council and regional staff. Morrow says he can spend an average of three days a week in the office.

He's not interested in having a car provided for him, but because he lives at the opposite end of the region from the office and spends a lot of time driving, he thinks a phone in his car could be a real benefit.

The new chairman said his first priority would be to bring decorum to the meetings and end what he and others have termed "the three ring circus".

Mr. Morrow made it clear he wouldn't be voicing his own opinion, but rather the opinion of council on issues as they came up.

"It is not for me to say we

should have equalized water rates. I'll make all information available to council, but I won't express my view—I'll express council's view. I won't bend, nudge or coerce council's view on any issue. We have to get back to reflecting the views of the people," he stressed.

Mr. Morrow noted that as a chairman elected by council instead of the people, he doesn't have a mandate and feels he should vote only to break a tie.

One reporter suggested that regional government was still in need of a selling job especially in the north, and wondered who would sell

it if the chairman adopted a low public profile.

Morrow claimed that getting the council to work as a mature decision-making body would do more to sell regional government than anything he could do by being at public functions.

Reporters were disturbed by Morrow's election as a part time chairman, when only a week earlier he had spoken strongly in favor of the need for a full time chairman.

Neither his letter to councillors nor his speech explained why he changed his mind on that count and he was reluctant to expound

upon that during his press conference.

He did say, however, the obvious change in council's attitude and the confusion at an informal meeting triggered his nomination.

During a telephone interview prior to the election, he had said the idea of a part time chairman had never been considered as a possibility, prior to council's meeting to discuss the election of a chairman.

The last question of the press conference was, "How do you feel right now?"

"Like someone just hit me over the head," he replied.

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COUNCILLORS TOOK their oath of office during the regional inaugural meeting Wednesday. Councillors shown in this picture are Jim Kerr, Milton; Walter Mulkewich, Burlington; Laurie Mannell, Oakville; Jack Raftis, Burlington; Ron Planche, Oakville; Don Carter, Burlington; Tom Sutherland, Burlington; Roy Booth, Halton Hills and Jim Watson, Milton.



THE EXPRESSION of dejection on Allan Masson's face told the story after he lost his job as Halton Regional Chairman at the council's inaugural meeting Wednesday. Ric Morrow of Halton Hills is the new chairman.



NEWLY ELECTED Regional Chairman Ric Morrow took the seat after being elected Wednesday. Clerk Garfield Brown is shown in the background.

Council - staff seminar today

Newly elected chairman Ric Morrow wasted little time in getting on with the job as regional chairman.

Mr. Morrow met with reporters near the end of a reception at the inaugural meeting and then dined with Halton's Chief Administrative Officer Ernie Reid that evening.

The CAC said he felt the meeting then had helped them come to grips and help understand each other. "I think we'll enjoy working together. Ric is young. He has a lot of ideas. I look forward to the opportunity to bounce ideas off one another," he said.

Mr. Reid wouldn't comment on what seemed to be a

desire by the new chairman to keep the power of the region under close scrutiny.

New approach

But he did say that it is reasonable to expect a different approach by a person appointed by the province and given a bill, as opposed to one elected by council. He said the fact Morrow was elected would give him a greater political sensitivity, but he still has the bill to follow.

As Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Reid is the staff member who works most closely with the chairman. A meeting of council has been scheduled today (Wednesday) to pass five by-laws. The by-laws deal with capital

expenditure and have to be processed prior to the end of the month. Money being spent is allocated under the 1977 budget.

Seminar

Following the meeting a council-staff seminar will be held at Halton Centennial Manor in Milton.

Mr. Reid said the seminar is entitled "Halton Region, Past and Present" and is designed to help new members become oriented and help new and old members get to know one another.

Mr. Morrow indicated that he would be holding a special meeting of council to determine the goals council wants to achieve over the next two years.

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