

# Farmer, Morrow take hammering over budget

**By Bob Burt**  
Hostilities and frustrations that have been building up for months were ushered to the fore last week during a heated meeting of Halton Region's Administration Committee.

The meeting exploded when members of the committee battled in an effort to come to grips with the proposed \$33,000,000 budget.

Regional Chairman Ric Morrow and Regional Treasurer Don Farmer absorbed the brunt of the attack by committee members.

Oakville Councillor Carl Eriksen charged that there is a credibility gap and a lot of distrust between council and the chairman and the treasurer.

Eriksen said there could be no trust placed in reports coming from the staff after what council has experienced

with recent reports.

"I see no leadership at the top, only confrontation and the chairman adds to this at every opportunity," Eriksen said.

Burlington Mayor Mary Munro supported Eriksen's contention and said the budget had been presented in a dishonest fashion.

When Chairman Morrow protested and took issue with Munro's charge of dishonesty, committee chairman Mac Anderson suggested the word "deceptive" would have been a better choice.

Councillors termed the budget "misleading and confusing" and ordered the budget cut by almost five per cent — from a 10.2 per cent increase to 5.4 per cent.

Mrs. Munro said that if all the facts were on the table, the committee could reach some conclusions.

"Damn it all, Mr. Chairman, there comes a time of reckoning when we have to admit our mistakes and say we never should have handled the budget in this fashion. We just haven't had a grasp on the budget," charged Councillor David Coons of Burlington.

"I say now, Mr. CAO (Chief Administrative Officer) go back and cut this budget by a half million dollars and report back to this committee. I'll be the first to stand and protect you in council," Coons said.

Councillor Jim Watson said the elected people have lost control of the budget process under regional government. He said it has become so complicated, none of the elected people can understand it.

Oakville Councillor Ron Planche said he knew all along that the budget was up 10 per cent and criticized councillors for not having done their homework. "The chairman and his staff have dazzled us with their footwork," Planche said.

Planche's allegation brought cries of outrage from committee members.

"I do my homework and you know it. If you ever say that again, you'd better either

be prepared to back it up or I'll take you on," Councillor Eriksen shouted.

"The only homework Ron (Planche) does is his travel account. You can see it all here," Councillor Watson said, holding up the accounts for the month.

Time and time again councillors charged that treasurer Don Farmer had presented a distorted budget to the council.

Council had earlier passed a policy that was designed to limit the amount of long term borrowing and encourage a pay-as-you-go system.

But instead of taking 15 per cent of the capital projects and taking that money from current revenue, Farmer had

to increase the budget by almost \$2,000,000 to comply with the policy or violate the established guidelines.

Several councillors insisted staff had misinterpreted the policy — but after investigation, found that the policy was interpreted correctly but it didn't say what councillors had intended it to.

A motion to have the policy changed was withdrawn after Chief Administrative Officer Ernie Reid suggested the committee was changing horses in mid-stream.

Mayor Munro said in an interview that the change in policy would have to be pursued for next year because, "This policy does nothing about controlling spending."

## 11.5 miles

### Repairs to 401 in early May

Resurfacing of Highway 401 east of Campbellville Rd. interchange to half a mile east of Highway 6 is expected to get underway in May, according to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

Tenders will be opened for the project at Ministry headquarters in Downsview April 5, stated a Ministry spokesman.

The project—to include repairs in the area of Hanlon Expressway interchange, west of Highway 6—is expected to take 75 working days which would put the completion date in early fall, said the Ministry.

No estimate of cost of the repairs will be available until a tender has been chosen.

Resurfacing of the road is required because of roughness, said the Ministry.

The repairs will include about 11.5 miles of highway.

—Friday, March 17 is St. Patrick's Day, for all those who are Irish, and for those who wish they were.

—The maple syrup demonstration is drawing crowds to the Mountsberg Wildlife Centre west of Campbellville.

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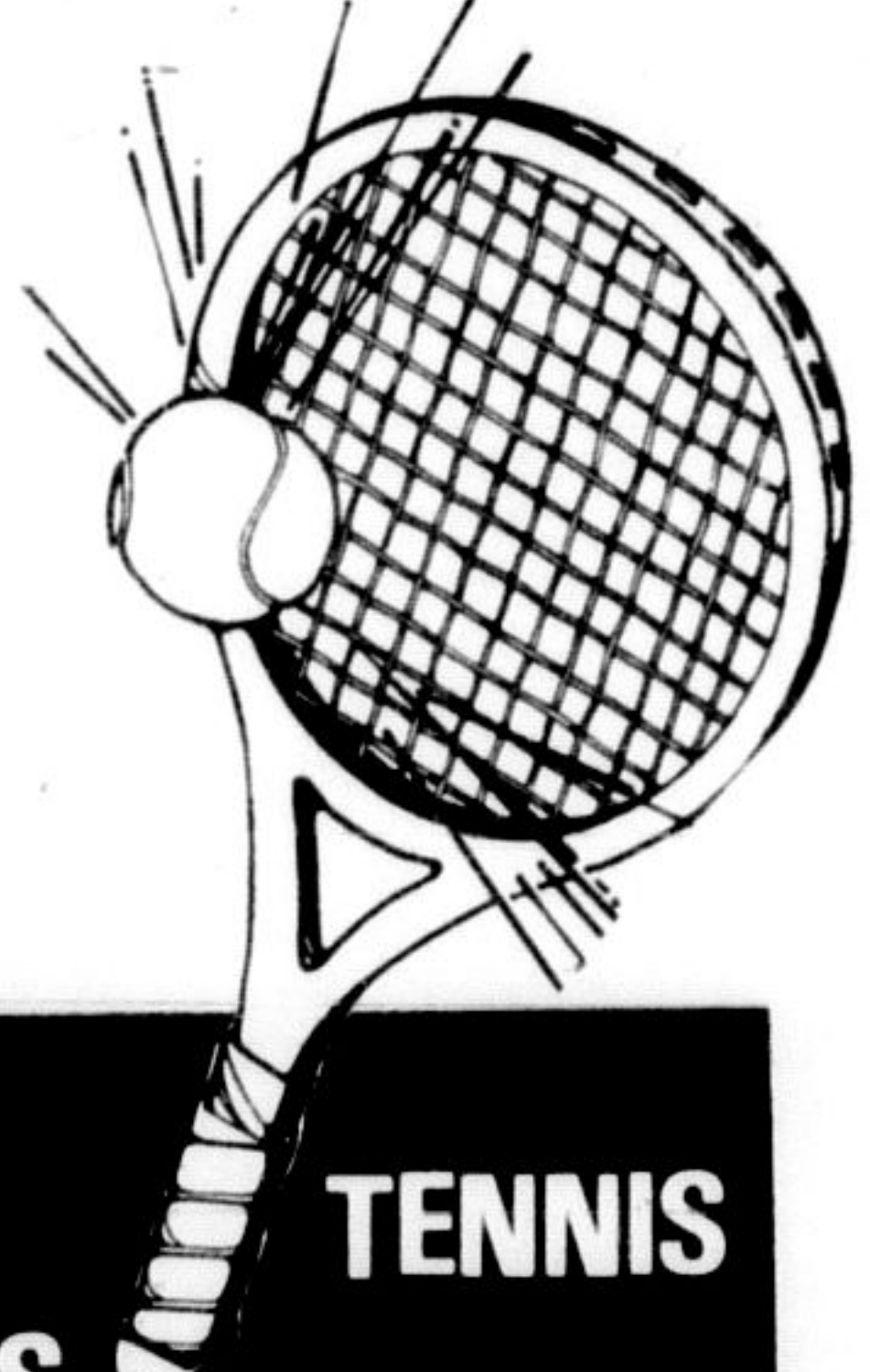


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