

MPP Chudleigh: Government will

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

The provincial government will not waver in its municipal restructuring plans, according to Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh.

Halton Chair Joyce Savoline recently asked the Tory government to back off, saying their initiatives will not make for simple, smaller, more accountable and less costly government.

Halton is spending \$100,000 in an ad campaign attacking the provincial strategy.

Ms Savoline has called the proposed new system unworkable. Mr. Chudleigh took a different position.

"If we came up with the existing system (of dividing responsibility between the provincial government and municipalities) people would say it's unworkable," said Mr. Chudleigh. "And they'd be right. The current system is a mess."

Mr. Chudleigh said his government's plan is only a first step in a long road of reform to put responsibility for services where it belongs.

Adjustments will come

He said the government will not likely get it all right the first time, making adjustments necessary.

He acknowledged the lack of financial information makes the process difficult but added municipalities usually receive their provincial grants late in the fall.

"I equate this process to trying to pass a big truck in a slush storm," he said. "As you pass the truck you can't see, but you know that if you get 10 feet ahead, it will all be clear. I think this present uncertainty is worth the goal of getting ahead."

He said the province is not going to give municipalities a blank cheque to make reform a break-even deal locally. Municipalities are going to have to reassess their spending and show they are being efficient before any money will be forthcoming.

"I haven't seen a lot of attempts by municipalities to do that," he said, adding that it applies in Halton and across the province.

Mr. Chudleigh made the point that local councils haven't downsized. He added that, while the relative savings are small for such a move, the unwillingness to change demonstrates a lack of regard to cost efficiency.

He said councils have to look at every segment of their operations and determine what they really need, from politicians to trucks. In Chatham-Kent road maintenance was privatized, he said, and it has worked well.

They all think that

"All municipalities think they are the best managed municipality in Ontario," said Mr. Chudleigh. "School boards said the same thing. Methinks they doth protest too much."

He encouraged people to vote in upcoming municipal elections for candidates with a good management record, either as part of government or in some other area.

Ms Savoline has said the Ontario government is caught between two promises, one not to do anything to increase property taxes, and the other to reduce the provincial income tax by 30 per cent.

Mr. Chudleigh disagreed, pointing to recent provincial accounting which suggests that increased economic activity has financed the income tax cut.

"The income tax cut is self-financing, which we said it would be," he said. "The upturn in the economy is producing more tax dollars."

Mr. Chudleigh said Ontario did not participate in an improved overall economy in

1993 but has responded overwhelmingly since 1995, due in large part to his government's policies.

One too many

Mr. Chudleigh said Ontario does not need two tiers of municipal government. "We don't need two levels," he said.

"I'm fighting to keep the lower tier (Milton council, as opposed to Halton Region). I see the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB) as a body from which local governments could purchase services."

The GTSB is not dead, according to the Halton North MPP. Legislation to set up the board should be tabled before mid-

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the Greater Halton.

He said Halton still has an option to pull out of the GTA, but discouraged that, noting it is better to be at the negotiating table.

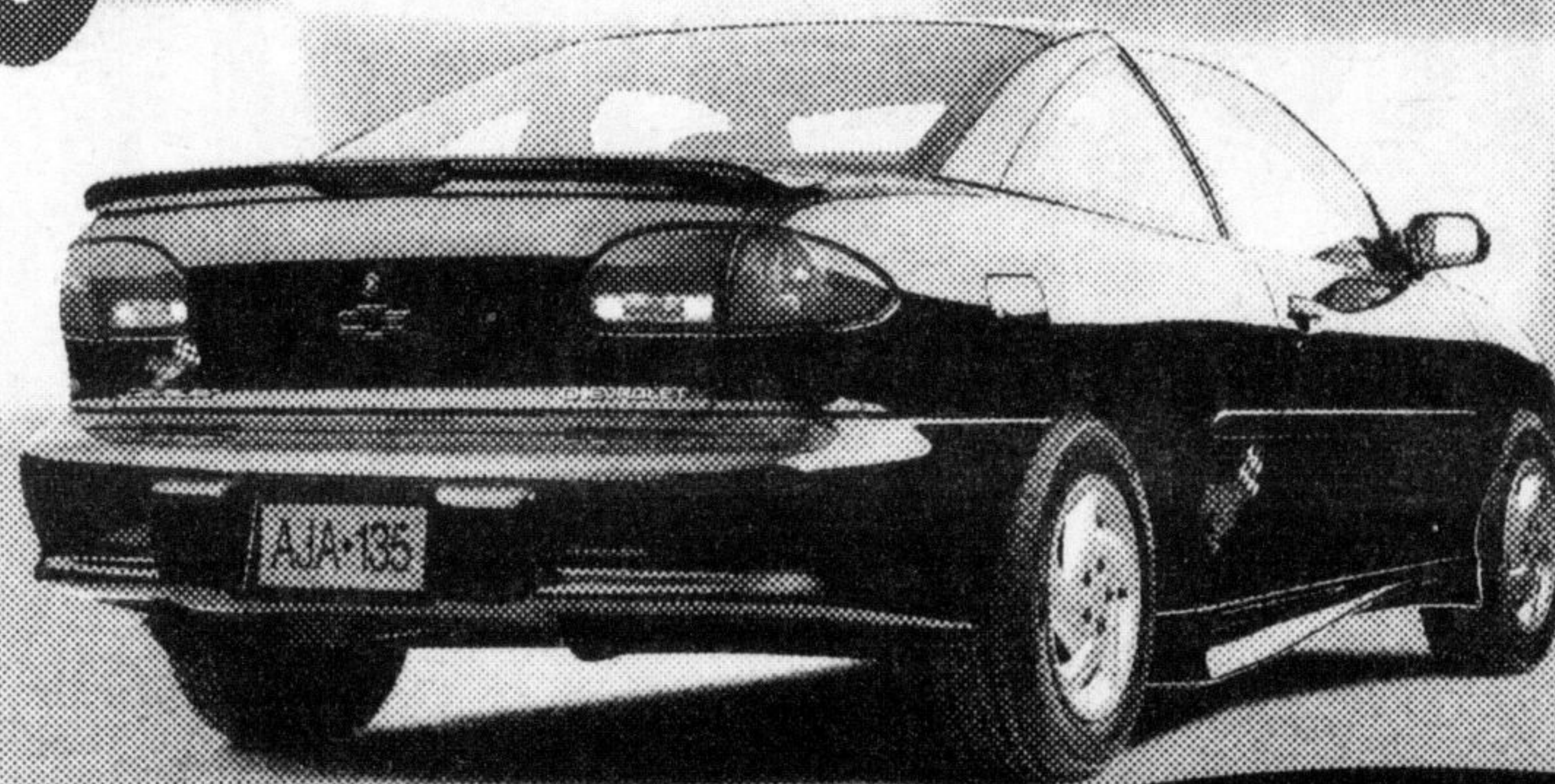


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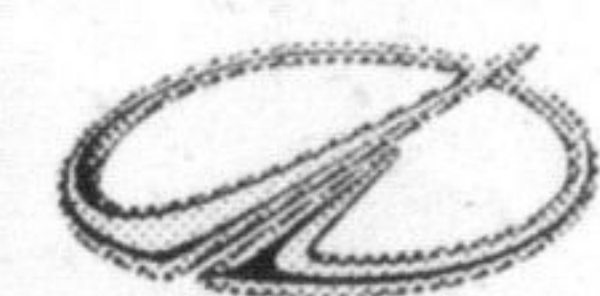
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