

Merger could benefit, says director

By HOWARD MOZEL
Special to The Champion

The executive director of the Halton District Health Council says meaningful input from the communities it serves will continue despite next year's merger with its Peel Region counterpart.

Linda Rothney explained that since Peel and Halton share many of the same concerns — such as growing and aging populations — the amalgamation could prove mutually beneficial.

"We're positive about it here," said Ms Rothney. "We have similar primary issues."

Ms Rothney agrees there will be "opportunities for administrative efficiencies" such as joint payrolls. Savings can then be re-invested in front-line service.

The Halton District Health Council (DHC) is comprised of people from all over the region, including health care

providers, consumers and elected officials.

DHCs advise the minister of health on the needs within their areas, make recommendations on the allocation of resources to meet those requirements and help develop and implement a balanced and integrated health care system.

The Ministry of Health is trimming the number of health councils in Ontario from 33 to 16 by March, 1998 in conjunction with its overall health care restructuring. There will be no change in the mandate of DHCs.

"The ministry believes firmly in the fact that local input needs to occur," said Ms Rothney.

Ms Rothney explained that this restructuring has been in the works for well over a year and DHC has provided the province with input. The criteria used in the changes included everything from referral patterns and population to geography.

The only surprise, said Ms Rothney, was

the merger with Peel, a plan that moves the Halton DHC from the Central West region and combines it with Central East — the only DHC in Ontario that will make such a change. Ms Rothney explained that Halton already enjoys many joint projects with Peel, such as a long-term care evaluation project and a new committee looking at cancer services.

"We've been working with our partners in Peel all along," she said.

In addition to Ms Rothney, the Halton DHC employs a project manager, three health planners and two support staff. Final staffing is still under review. While only one executive director will be required, she did say that — given the population of Halton and Peel — the "vast majority" of staffers will likely move into new positions.

When asked if she can foresee a downside, Ms Rothney explained continued co-operation should ensure there isn't one.

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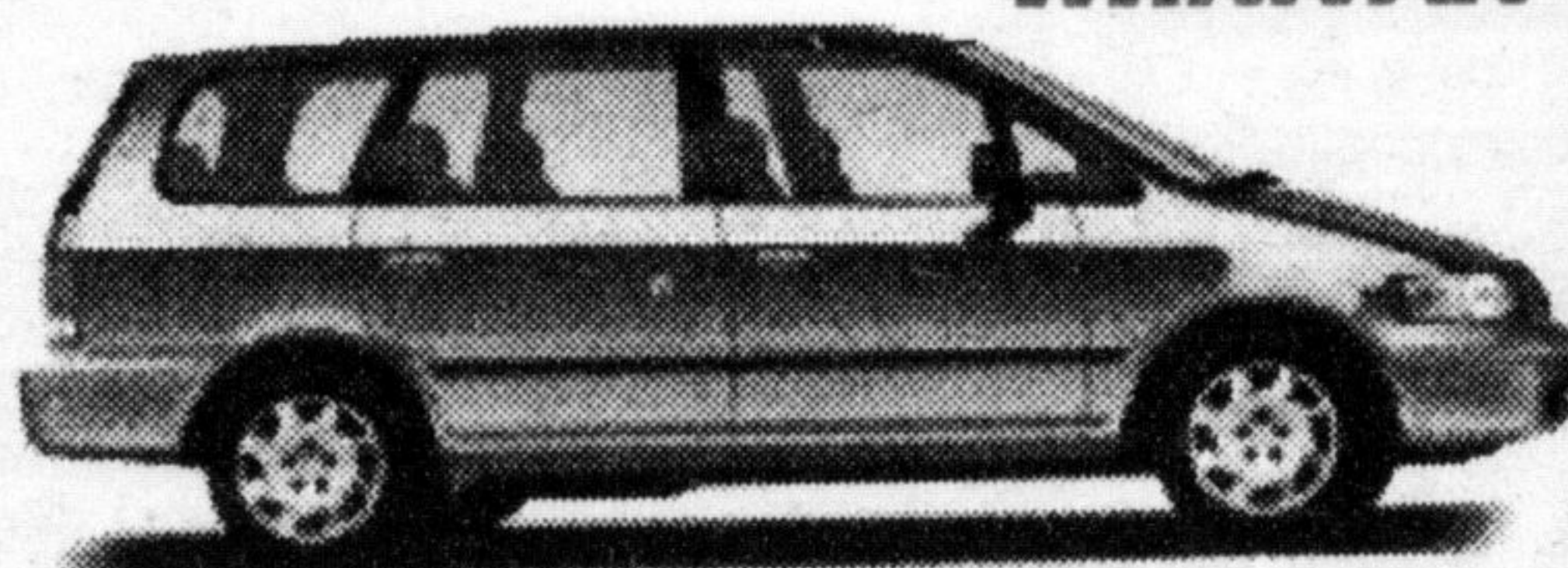
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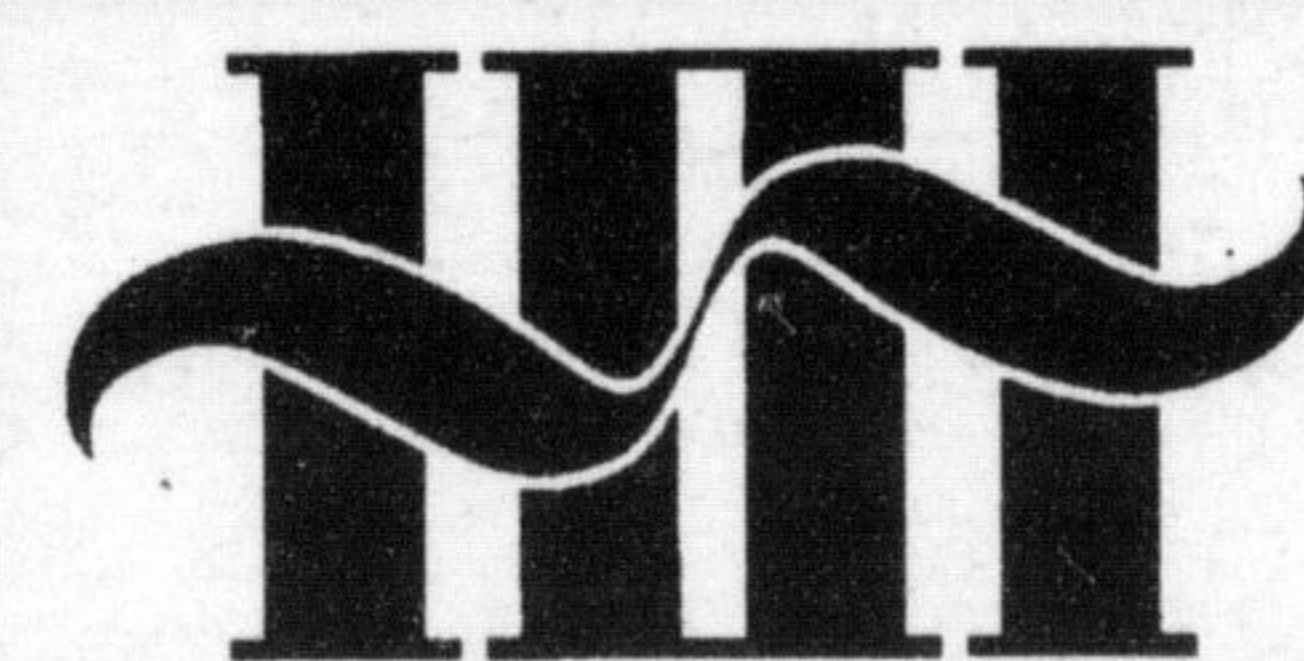
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