

Renovation inches ahead amid controversy

By **BRAD REAUME**
The Champion

Halton Region has inched closer to renovating Martin House, the last original facility at Milton's Allendale senior residence.

But even that modest step prompted the beginnings of a north-south turf battle.

On the one side, Milton politicians pressed to get on with the project. On the other, some Burlington and Oakville representatives lobbied for more senior care in their municipalities, something they feel has been sorely lacking too long.

Regional council has only decided to consider renovations to Martin House.

The plan passed last week, but not without substantial argument on where the beds should be located and how the idea feeds into recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

A design for Martin House and the 100 long term care beds in the facility has been 10 years in the making.

Originally Martin House was to be torn down and beds moved to a new facility to be built in



Walter Mulkewich

south Halton, after the construction of Allendale.

However, economic difficulties put that on the back burner.

Now regional council appears to be convinced

of the economy of maintaining Martin House and even expanding its capacity to 150 beds through renovations.

Burlington mayor-elect Rob MacIsaac said it was prudent to put off the decision until council had a chance to reply to the Health Restructuring Commission. But most councillors felt the two processes were independent and Halton will get funding for many more long term care beds.

"The restructuring report has nothing to do with this," said Burlington Councillor Jack Dennison, who has shepherded the proposal through council.

"The restructuring report will only be better for Halton, not worse."

Oakville Councillor Kathy Graham, who until recently had a family member at Allendale, said Martin House is "in desperate need of renovation."

Milton Councillor Colin Best said there are more than 400 people on the waiting list to get into Allendale. The renovation plan would bring the current 100-bed facility at Martin House up to date and provide space for an additional 50 long term care beds. Funding for the additional

beds is expected to be announced by the province in the spring.

The mayors of Burlington and Oakville both supported Mr. MacIsaac.

"To say this is not included in the health care restructuring reflects a complete misunderstanding of health care service integration in Ontario," said Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkewich. "Hospitals are not just one little empire any more."

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz pressed for action, saying council had been dithering on the issue for far too long.

Taking issue with claims that Martin House issues have been undetermined for years, Mr. Mulkewich angrily said the plan to renovate Martin House is little more than a year old. He explained that prior to that plans had always included moving 100 beds to the south.

Mr. Best countered by saying only 30 per cent of long term care beds in the region are in Milton. Allendale is the only long term care facility operated by Halton Region.

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