

# Region backs local business so far in car debate

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

Halton Region has become embroiled in a sensitive debate over the future course for the area's largest employers.

So, far, local interests appear to have the upper hand.

On Wednesday representatives of various auto industry groups lined up on either side of the 35-year old Canada-United States Auto Pact, a trade agreement governing the manufacture, sale and import of automobiles in North America.

Debate swirled around free trade through the lifting of tariff protection afforded Auto Pact companies, and the fair trade practices enforced by the Auto Pact agreement. Halton officials were developing a position on the issue to prod the federal government.

Members of Halton's administration and finance committee were told to re-examine the matter after a full council discussion determined elected officials had not heard all submissions of interested parties.

The committee will now ask council to lobby the federal government for reversal of a recent decision cutting tariff protection,

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JOYCE SAVOLINE



and to only allow lower tariffs on finished vehicles and parts. The committee resolution also recommends that any such

changes take effect solely as part of broader negotiations with all manufacturers aimed at securing free market access for everyone, everywhere, competing in the auto industry.

"Auto Pact companies are concerned the tariff might be eliminated altogether. The answer is no. That idea is as dead as a dodo," emphasized Halton MP Julian Reed, also parliamentary secretary to international trade minister Serge Marchi.

Mr. Reed said there is concern with the decline in value of Asian currencies, which could lead to cheaper Asian built cars flooding the North American market.

"All MPs with an interest have made it clear we have to do everything to preserve the industry in Canada. It's the engine of the economy," Mr. Reed said.

"There are no more planned reductions in the tariff. The day may come in the future, maybe 30 years or so, when these things may have some feasibility."

Mr. Reed said the trend around the world is to freer trade and lower tariffs but he acknowledged that some countries are not open enough in their trading policies.

The Auto Pact has been modified through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) but still forms the cornerstone of trade policy in Ontario's single biggest industry.

The trade agreement requires manufacturers who have signed on to utilize certain percentages of Canadian built parts and manufacturing in return for duty and tariff free movement of automobiles between Canada and the United States. Those companies not involved in the agreement have to pay a 6.7 per cent tariff on cars they import into Canada.

### Mulvale concerned

According to Oakville Mayor Anne Mulvale, Honda and Toyota, which operate Ontario manufacturing plants, were given the opportunity to sign on to the Auto Pact in 1989 but declined. Now, she says, they are pushing for an end to the agreement.

Councillors were divided on the issue. Several supported the eventual move to free trade and a reduction in the tariff, however most were concerned about protecting the Auto Pact as a bargaining chip in negotiations.

"At the end of the day protectionism penalizes the consumer," said Burlington Mayor Rob MacIssac. He said he could support a go-slow approach, similar to the stance of the federal government on ending tariff barriers.

"This is not about keeping tariffs," said Ms Mulvale. "It's not about Japanese culture versus Canadian culture. It's about giving advice to the federal government."

Burlington Councillor John Taylor said there is no question that the Auto Pact represents "a discriminatory tax policy in Canada" and that no other industry had that kind of arrangement. He added it should be removed in the long term, with government encouraging growth in jobs in the short term. He pointed out that Canada is a net exporter of automobiles.

Oakville's Keith Bird noted that whenever the federal government lets a big contract they make creating spin-off economic benefits virtually mandatory.

"What spin-off effect will there be to dropping the tariff?" he asked.

Halton Chair Joyce Savoline said it is not smart to give up a bargaining chip in free trade negotiations. She pointed to the non-compliance of many Far Eastern countries with provisions in previously negotiated auto trade agreements.

"If you want to accuse me of protectionism I'll wear it proudly," she said. "I'm protecting jobs. There are 10,000 families in Halton who rely on those jobs in the auto industry. It's far too big a risk to take away the barriers and see what happens."

Halton alone has 10,000 jobs tied to the auto industry, 5,000 of which are at Ford of Canada's Oakville plant. Other manufacturing for the automotive sector occurring throughout the region.

Representatives of auto industry players at the meeting included Ken MacDonald of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association; Michael Sheridan, director of government policy at Ford of Canada; Bill Van Gaal, president of the Canadian Autoworkers Local 707, and Michael Edmonds of the Canadian Association of Japanese Automobile Dealers.

## Oakville bank robbed

Halton Regional Police are searching for a man who used a bomb threat to rob a Bank of Montreal in Oakville last Friday.

Approaching the teller at 1:43 p.m., the suspect handed over a note indicating he had a bomb and demanded money.

An undisclosed amount of cash was placed in a folder and the man calmly left the bank. He was last seen walking westbound on Lakeshore Road.

No one was injured and no bomb was seen.

The suspect was described as male, white, in his mid-30s, six feet tall, very thin and very pale with a large nose. He was seen wearing a blue bomber jacket, a blue ski-doo type hat with a pom-pom and a light coloured shirt.

Anyone with information is asked to call detectives in Oakville at 825-4747, ext. 2215 or Crime Stoppers at 825-8477.

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**TAX NOTICE**

Ratepayers of the Town of Milton are reminded that the first installment of the 1998 Interim Tax Bill is due on March 5, 1998

If you require information about taxes, please contact the Corporate Services Tax Department at 878-7211, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday.

Tax payments must be received in the Corporate Services Office on or before the due date to avoid penalty. Late payment charge of 1 1/4% will be charged on the first day of default and on the first day of each calendar month in which the default continues. It is the responsibility of the ratepayer to ensure that the taxes are paid by the due date, even in the event that the bill is not received as mailed.

Taxes may be paid:

- By mail to the Corporate Services Tax Department, 43 Brown St., Milton ON L9T 5H2. Cheques post dated to the due date are acceptable and encouraged.
- At the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Main St. Milton (there is a small service charge)
- By the phone if you bank with Canada Trust, TD Bank, CIBC, Royal Bank or Bank of Montreal. Please call them for details.
- By using the mail deposit box to the left of the glass doors at Town Hall.
- Between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm at the Corporate Services Tax Department, Town Hall, 43 Brown St., Milton. (cheque or money orders preferred rather than cash).

**BOARD & COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**  
Applications are now being accepted by the Acting Town Clerk for appointments to the following Boards and Committees

**Community Services Advisory Committee**  
(formerly known as Leisure Services Advisory Committee)  
(4 Members required for a one year term)

The Community Services Advisory Committee, recently established by Milton Council in accordance with By-law No. 18-98, will provide a forum for public input and consultation on a broader range of programs and services delivered by the Town of Milton. The mandate of the C.S.A.C. is an advisory and consultative one, providing input to Milton Council vis-a-vis the respective Standing Committee of Council on issues that are of a 'community service nature' with respect to the program areas of Leisure Services; Public Works, Fire and Transit.

**Milton Public Library Board**  
(1 Member required for a three year term)

The Milton Public Library Board manages and controls the Milton Public Library, in accordance with the Public Libraries Act and as authorized by Milton Council in accordance with By-law No. 15-74. In summary, the Library Board's mandate is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's needs.

For the above noted Committee appointments, the successful applicant must be a resident of Milton, or owner or tenant of land in the municipality, or the spouse of such an owner or tenant, be a minimum of 18 years of age on the date of appointment, or employees of a business located in the municipality or students attending a school located in the Town of Milton.

**Board of Management for the Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA)**  
(4 Members required for a three year term)

The mandate of the Board of Management for the Downtown Business Improvement Area as established by Milton Council, in accordance with By-law No. 112-77, is for the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned lands, buildings and structures in the area designated as the Downtown Business Improvement Area and to promote the designated area as business or shopping area.

To qualify to sit as a Member on the Board of the D.B.I.A., the member shall be assessed for business assessment in respect of land in the Improvement Area, or nominees of Corporations so assessed.

Please apply in writing, stating your qualifications and/or interest. Applications will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 16th, 1998. Further details may be obtained by contacting the undersigned at (905) 878-7211, Ext. 132.

Helen Lisi, Acting Town Clerk  
The Corporation of the Town of Milton  
43 Brown Street  
Milton, Ontario L9T 5H2