## Social planning council on the bubble in future

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

The Halton Social Planning Council will get its \$96,008 grant this year but future funding looks very uncertain.

Recently members of Halton's health and social services committee requested a report on the impact of eliminating the grant over five years.

Halton's grant makes up 30 per cent of the Social Planning Council's base funding. Much of the rest comes from the United Way.

The committee decision was ratified at the Halton council meeting last Wednesday.

"I'm very confident that members of the committee will recognize the value of our work for them and for the community," said social planning council executive director Joey Edwardh. "I hope the Region will take the position we are building community beyond just what government does. We are trying to be the glue between various parts of our community."

Ms Edwardh added that a study of activities by the social planning council will point out its advantages.

Social planning council board member Michael Cushing said after the committee meeting that it is unrealistic to think that government, especially given fiscal pressure, will not look at everything to reduce costs.

"To think that anyone can get by without scrutiny wouldn't be realistic," he noted.

The social planning council has two main functions. It operates a volunteer center which helps coordinate volunteers for various agencies across Halton and it

does social research and organizes some programs.

Ms Edwardh defended her agency. She explained the social planning council was instrumental in creating the First Base after school program in 1985, Milton Community Information Services in 1984 and a women's shelter in south Halton in 1993, among other achievements.

"We work to give diverse groups a voice and try to minimize the impact of major changes in our society, such as unemployment and decreasing social services," she explained.

The volunteer section of the social planning council has arranged 129,000 hours of volunteer work for various agencies in Halton. Using government calculation methods this time is estimated to be worth the equivalent of \$2,052,000 of paid work, Ms Edwardh explained.

In response to those who might want to continue one function and ignore another Ms Edwardh said the social planning function of the council is intertwined with the volunteer section.

Committee members heard that staff at the council has been reorganized and benefits are now being provided to employees, driving those costs up about 15 per cent.

"We wanted to stabilize our staff situation and bring some dignity to staff," Mr. Cushing said. "Many staff were trying to patch together a living from several parttime jobs before the reorganization."

Mr. Cushing explained the core funding provided by the Region is understood as different from program funding. He said, while it may not continue forever, it does

see MURKY on page 19

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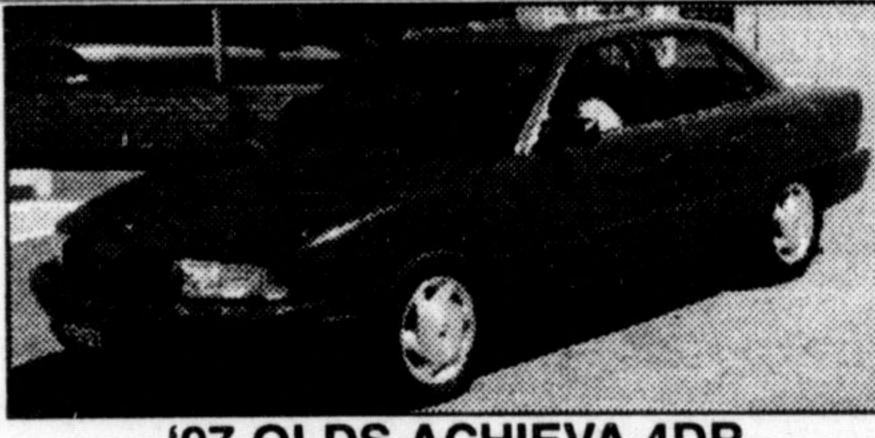
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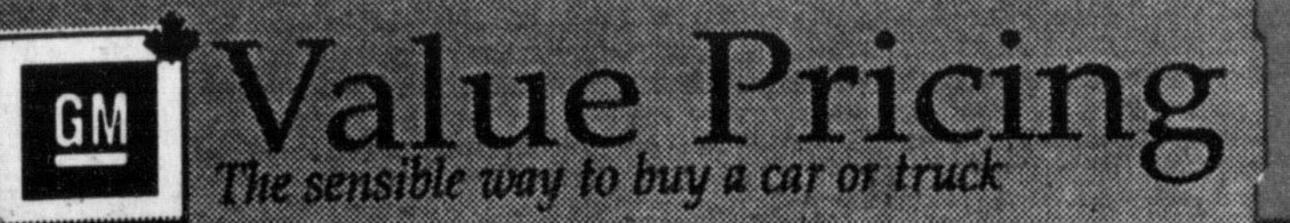
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