

Many options being aired for ambulance service

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

As the reorganization of ambulance services is being considered, the sirens of privatization are calling loudest.

Halton regional officials were recently presented with an outline of their options for reorganization. Provincial regulations require municipalities to take charge of ambulance service by January 1, 2000.

The options for reorganizing the present service are so wide-ranging that it is likely Halton and other Greater Toronto Area (GTA) communities will continue with the current system while bringing in change slowly.

At the heart of the issue is an attempt to blend all emergency services.

"This is an emotional issue," said Burlington Councillor Linda Schreiber. "I don't want the

service to change too radically in the beginning because people would become very afraid. We have to take little steps."

Halton Hills Councillor John Day agreed, saying small steps and building trust among partners are necessary for the new system to succeed.

It is likely that Halton's ambulance services will be integrated with at least one other municipality, likely Peel Region. Southern sections of Halton are covered currently by the Halton-Mississauga Ambulance service. Northern Halton is covered by a different one.

However, Peel Region is not participating in a joint study of the issue. A study by IBI Group consultants is being cost-shared by regional governments in Halton, York and Durham.

"We have to be flexible," said Burlington Councillor Carole D'Amelio. "It's important to be able to change as the process unfolds."

Control of dispatch services remains unre-

solved and controversial. Provincial officials want to keep it. According to the study consultants, the province wants ambulance service to be seamless and unaffected by municipal borders.

Municipalities have suggested that it is most efficient for them to control dispatch, along with individual ambulances.

Halton officials will have to consider several business models for the new service, including setting up ambulances as a public utility, using a private contract, grandfathering the present organization or joint arrangements with other municipalities.

According to IBI's project manager Marv Rubenstein, the principles which must be followed in the reorganization include universal access, seamless services across boundaries and integration with other health services.

The consultants will provide a report to Halton

council in December. At that time they will be looking for municipalities to begin narrowing options.

There are currently 11 ambulance operators in the GTA. There are 400,000 calls each year for service, including 240,000 calls in Toronto and 28,000 in Halton. Call volumes are expected to increase significantly in the next five years in Halton as a result of population growth and aging.

Consultants looked closely at several North American communities to determine if ambulance service models can be parachuted into the GTA.

Calgary runs its service as a city department, Las Vegas has hired a private operator, Richmond, Virginia contracts the service out with a committee of council running the operation, and San Diego County contracts out both ambulance and fire services.

Wally Hunter breaks the tie on controversial road

By BRAD REAUME
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They know where they are going but can't decide how to get there.

Members of Milton's administration and planning committee agreed a private road off Five Side Road will eventually become a municipal one. However, it took a vote from committee chair Wally Hunter to break a tie and endorse taking a wait-and-see approach.

Milton likely will wait for an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) decision on a potential land severance in the area before proceeding with discussions on how to convert the roadway to municipal control.

The committee agreed to continue to oppose the severance. The decision is sub-

• see TOUCHY on page 19



Wally Hunter

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD School Closing and Consolidation General Information Evening October 7, 1998 7:00 p.m.

A general Information Evening will be held at several locations as follows:

AREA	LOCATION
Milton	Milton District High School
Halton Hills	Georgetown District High School
Burlington East (East of Guelph Line)	Nelson High School
Burlington West (West of Guelph Line)	M.M. Robinson High School
Oakville North (North of Q.E.W.)	White Oaks Secondary
Oakville South (South of Q.E.W.)	T.A. Blakelock High School

If anyone is in doubt as to the appropriate location to attend, please check with your local school office.

Ethel Gardiner
Chair of the Board



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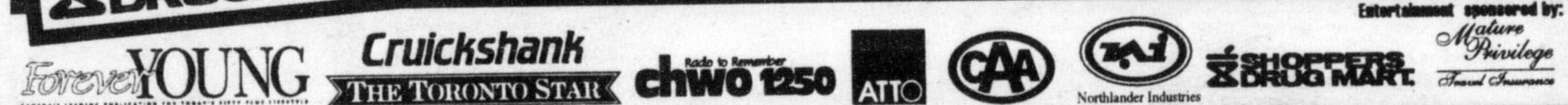


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