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The Canadian Champion



A Metroland Community Newspaper

Vol. 140 No. 12

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

40 Pages

75¢ (GST included)

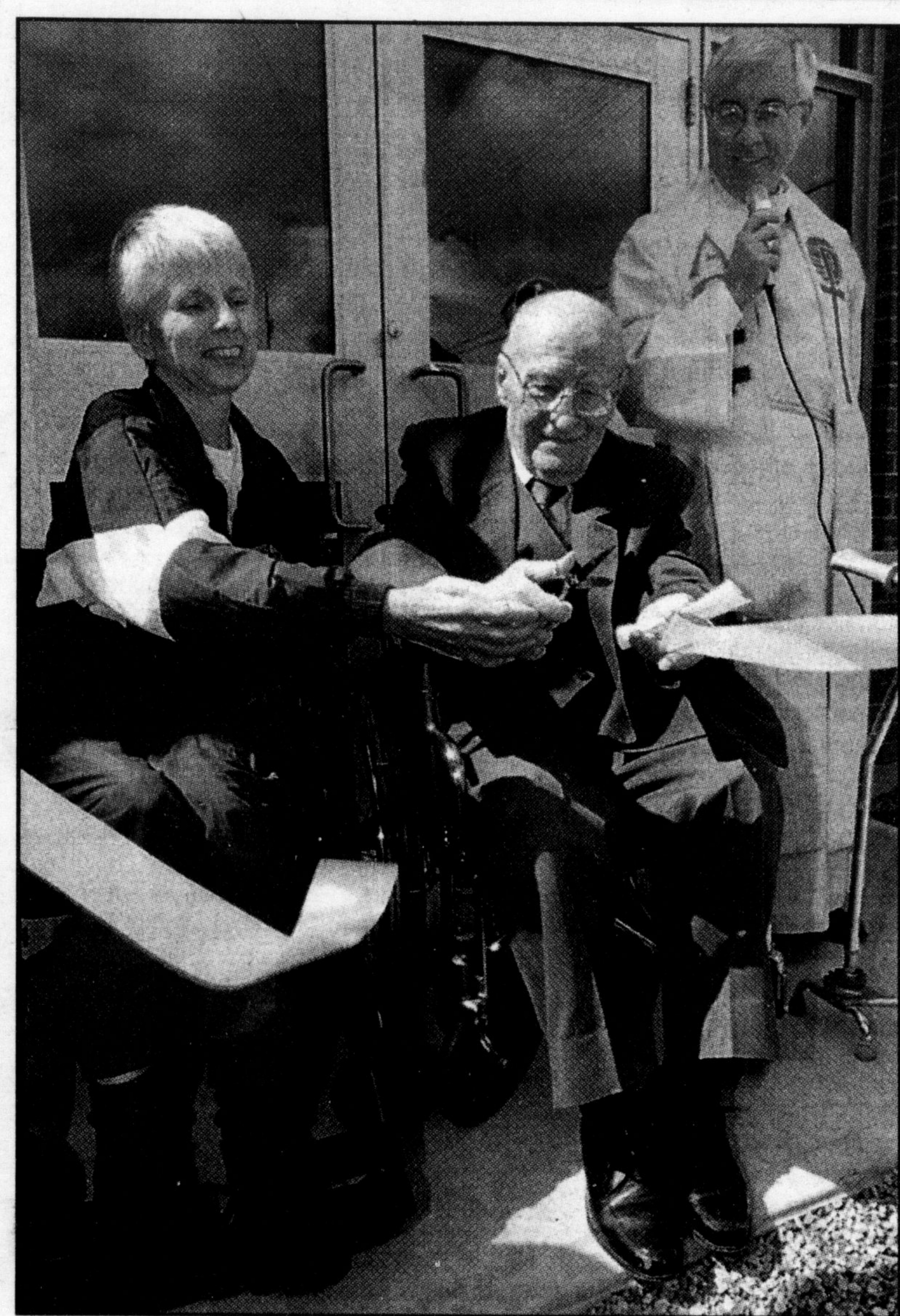


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Things looking up

St. Paul's United Church officially opened its lift-lobby, that will provide physically disabled parishioners access to all levels and areas of the building, during a special ceremony Sunday. Doing the ribbon cutting honours are long-time members Sue Hunt and Leonard McNeil while Rev. Bob Hyde looks on.

Police budget will cost taxpayers another \$12

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

The normally contentious Halton police budget passed at the committee level recently not with a bang, but a whimper.

"This is too easy," commented Burlington Councillor John Taylor at the regional administration and finance committee meeting.

Committee approved a \$45.9 million police budget, up \$2.4 million from last year.

That represents a 5.6 per cent budget increase. It amounts to a 4.8 per cent increase in the police services portion of a residential property tax bill.

That comes out to about \$12 extra per year for the owner of a \$185,000 home.

Though the budget appeared to skate through, it will have to stand up to a budget review committee before going to regional council for final approval tomorrow.

Low key approach

Police Chief Ean Algar appeared before the committee to make a low-key pitch for approval of the budget, which received a stamp of approval from the police services board earlier in the year.

Cost cutting measures have shaved expenses so that a full 83 per cent of the budget is being spent on personnel costs, said Chief Algar.

"We've done a lot," he said. "We continue to do a lot."

Debt and building costs take up more than \$2 million each in the budget. Another \$2 million is slated for vehicles and other capital costs.

The 1999 budget has set aside funds for the hiring of 24 new officers through a Community Partnerships Program (CPP).

Under CPP, the Province will temporarily pay half the salary of the new hires.

Despite this, a question mark will hang over the new hires until the results of an ongoing police review are known.

The \$92,000 review was launched in January to look into how Halton Regional Police do business.

In particular, it is meant to investigate police staffing formulas, known as the cop-to-pop calculations.

In that formula, police officers are hired on a population basis. The more the region grows, the more officers are hired.

Bird has concerns

A recommendation against that formula in the review could potentially put the new hires in jeopardy.

Should the officers not be recommended, \$400,000 set aside for them would go towards Y2K financing instead.

Oakville Councillor Keith Bird expressed concern with what was missing in the budget.

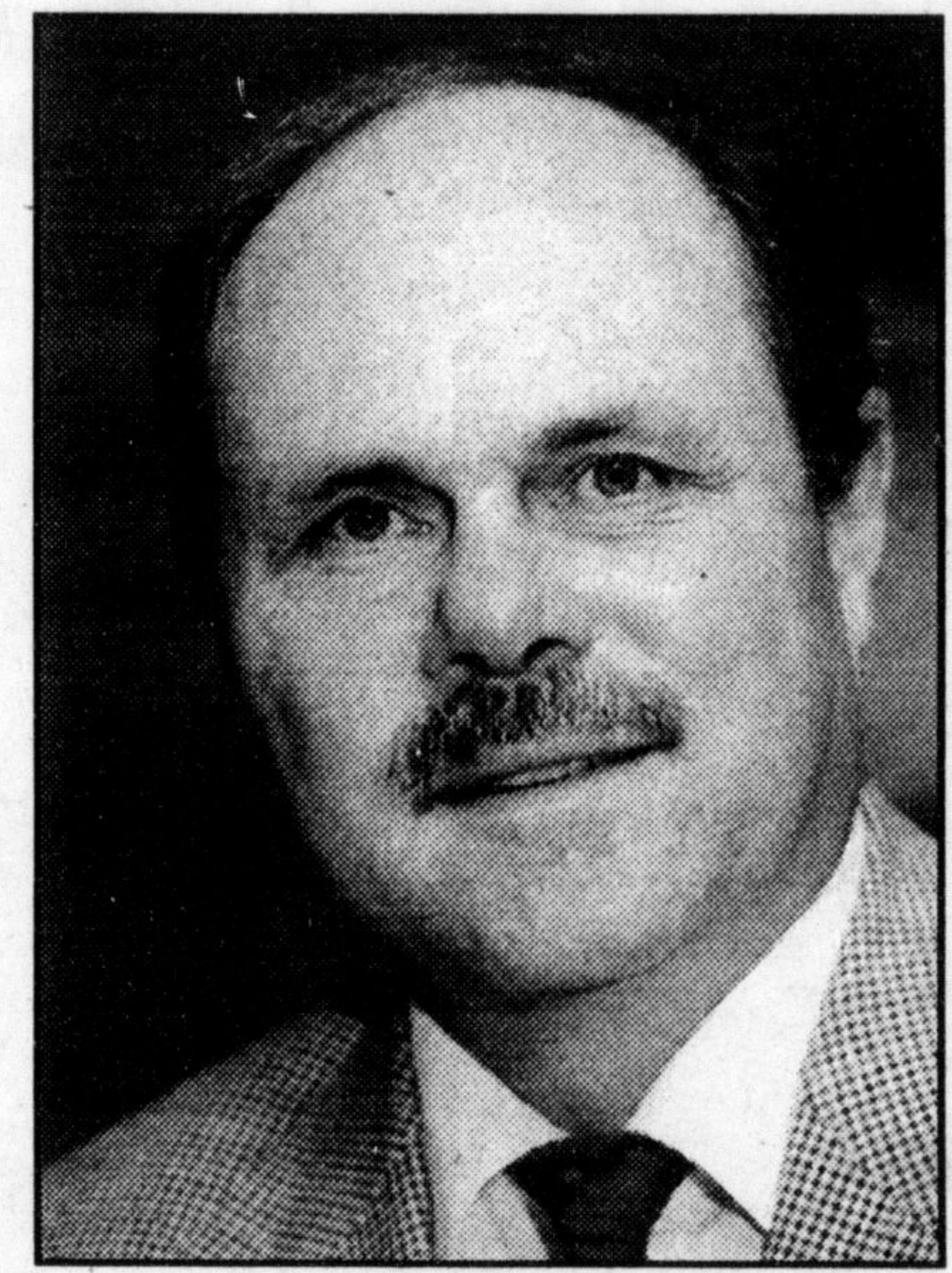
"Is the impact of Milton with the racetrack casino factored in here?" he asked. Beginning as early as June, Mohawk Raceway in Milton will be adding slot machines to their grounds.

Since that announcement, there have been concerns that policing and roads costs would increase as a result of extra traffic.

The police are taking a wait and see approach, said Chief Algar.

"We don't have that factored in," he said. "We're setting up a monitoring system first."

• see related story on page 3



Keith Bird

Milton won't get soaked for cost

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Milton residents will not likely drown in the cost of a new water tank, said Halton's planning commissioner Pat Murphy.

Instead, a \$2.4 million water tank will be financed by developers, assuming a new development charges bylaw is approved by regional council tomorrow.

"The \$2.4 million tank cost is a development charge," assured Mr. Murphy. "It will not be put on the residents of Milton."

The issue arose with little fanfare at a public meeting held at Halton council chambers recently.

Though members of all three regional committees turned out for the meeting, the matter was raised for information purposes only.

Even without a committee resolution, it will come before council for approval on Wednesday.

• see NEW on page 7

NEWSLINES

INSERTS

- Ennisclare Interiors (P)
- Fortinos (rural)
- Goodlets
- M & M Meats (rural)
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- White Rose (P)
- Zellers

Television hits her

A 51-year-old Pitfield Road woman was taken to hospital after a television monitor fell on her head at Bingo Country on Hwy. 25 Sunday night.

The woman was knocked unconscious, but came around before being transported by ambulance to Milton District Hospital. Her condition was unknown at press time.



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