

Landfill extension is reminder of the battle

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

A long and bitter fight over the placement of the Halton landfill site once fractured Halton Region, recalled Councillor Brian Penman last week.

Now the Region has announced that thanks to an aggressive waste diversion program the dump no one wanted may be around for an additional 27 years.

That would stretch the site's life span from a previously estimated 20 years to up to 47 years.

"There's no doubt there was a lingering animosity between all the parties," recalled Mr. Penman. "It was divisive. It separated the Region from Milton. It separated Burlington from Milton and it separated Burlington from the Region."

"I think what we thought is that once Milton had served its time, we'd look for another site, perhaps in Burlington," he said.

That appears to be a faint hope now, with the dump promising to last until close to 2040.

Even so, Mr. Penman is not expecting the news to incite the community like it had in the 1970s.

But mention of the dump can still evoke blistering memories of what was then the Region's first — and perhaps still the most furious — legal furball.

"The citizens invested thousands of hours and dollars to pay for this," he said. "It was a very emotional time."

For Mr. Penman, those emotions came pouring back when he heard of the landfill's extended life.

"It touched that chord in the past," he said.

Mr. Penman was a front-line player in the gut-wrenching war over the Halton landfill site.

It led to a contempt of court citation for Mr. Penman and Mayor Gord Krantz.

Legal battles helped ratchet the total cost of the dump to around the \$100 million mark.

Milton felt it was caught up in a David versus Goliath type of fight at the time, said Mr. Penman.

With its relatively small population, it prepared to stare down the Region.

The battle erupted shortly after Halton Region came into being in 1974.

It dragged on until 1992, when a reluctant Milton was finally chosen.

At that point, Halton waste was being shipped to the United States.

The practice left the Region vulnerable to unpredictable — and sometimes exorbitant — dumping fees.

The solution was to create a homegrown site right here in Halton.

The question was, where?

The first choice was a parcel of land at Britannia and Tremaine Roads.

Though the Region thought that area looked fine, residents had a different take.

They held everything from bake sales to dances to raise money to keep the dump out of their area, said Mr. Penman.

"That was fought over for years and years. A citizen's group was formed," he recalled. "I've never seen a community so galvanized around an issue."

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— BRIAN PENMAN



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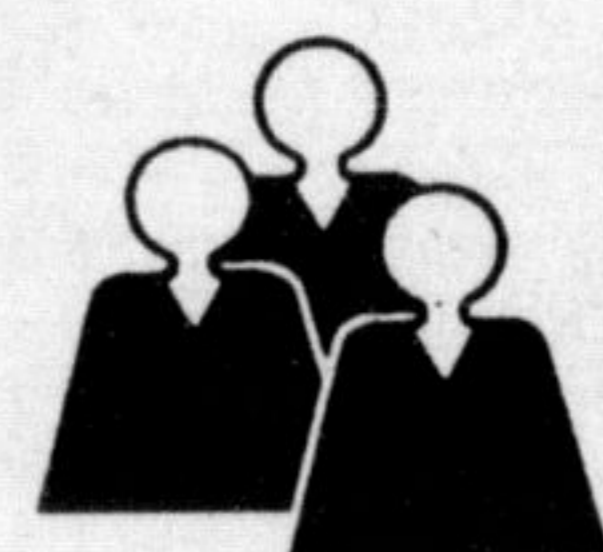
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