

Halton a mega city? Region will debate the idea in 2000

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Regional council will enter the next millennium with a debate on turning Halton into a mega-city.

At the tail end of a marathon Wednesday meeting, council approved a motion by Oakville Councillor Kurt Franklin to study the feasibility of joining the four municipalities together into one City of Halton.

Ironically, the vote to study regional restructuring will be recorded as the last one made by council this millennium.

"I look forward to coming back in January and addressing this issue," said Mr. Franklin.

A series of options will likely be studied, including the possibility of slicing up the Region to form the City of Oakville and the City of Burlington, with boundaries of both extending north to Hwy. 401.

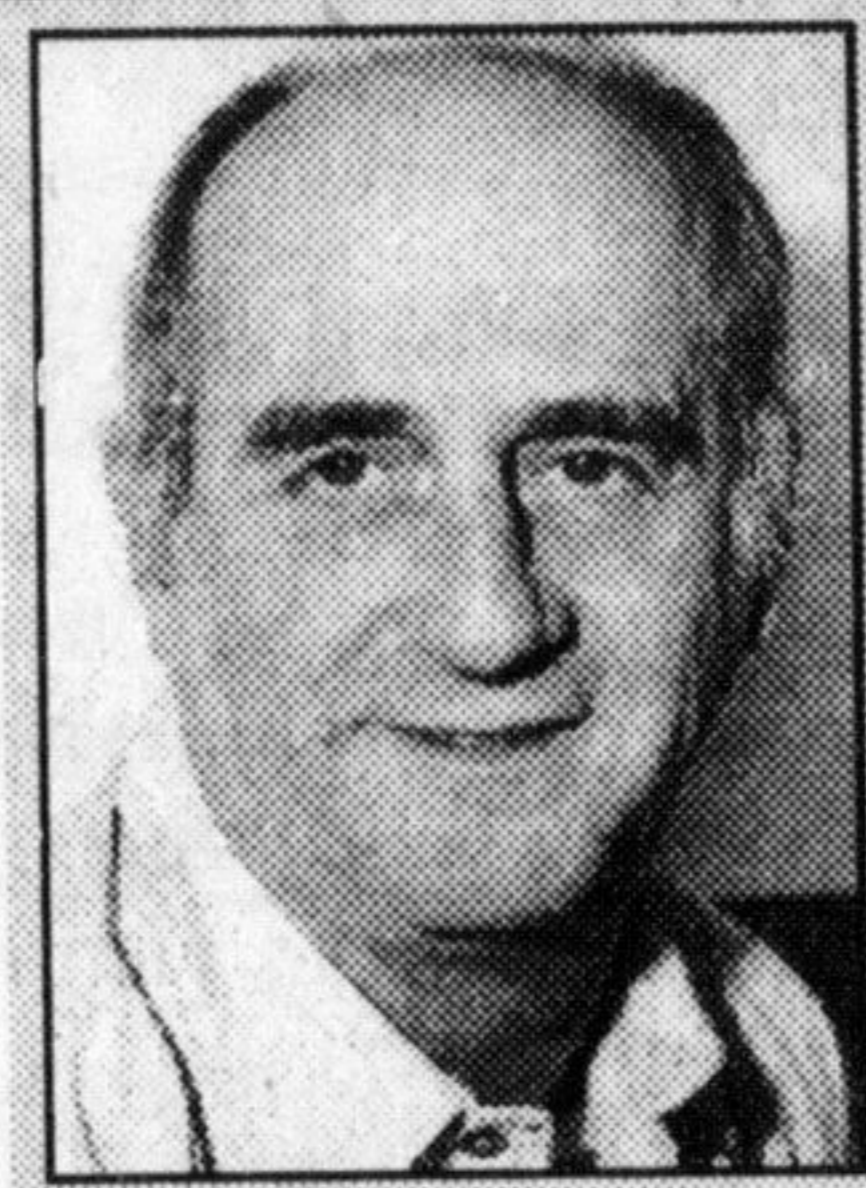
In that scenario, Georgetown would likely join with Brampton and Acton could attach itself to Guelph.

Mr. Franklin's motion to open up discussion on the issue was supported by Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac, who has long been espousing the need to restructure the region.

A previous bid by Mr. MacIsaac to amalgamate with Milton was rejected by town council. Flamborough also bowed out with a thanks but no thanks.

But this is the first time Halton Council has agreed to tackle the issue.

The aim is to stay one step ahead of the province,



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RICK MALBOEUF

which has set its sights on creating a mega-city in areas such as Hamilton-Wentworth.

And Municipal Affairs Minister Tony Clements has hinted that Halton may soon come onto the provincial radar screen.

Proactively studying the issue now could help come up with a made in Halton plan, instead of one imposed by the province, said Councillor Rick Malboeuf.

"We could take a look at it, see the advantages," he said. "Right now, everyone's talking."

But at first glance, he doesn't expect the two-city approach to pan out.

"How do we pay for the Halton Urban Structure Plan if we split up the region," he asked.

"It doesn't make sense. We couldn't handle the cost."

In the new year, a steering committee will be struck to study the issue, and engage in public consultations.

It is hoped that any costs will be shared by the four Halton municipalities.

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