

✓ Halton farmland protection needs work: Walton

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Halton's planning policies could use a little shoring up when it comes to protecting agricultural lands, the Region's planning and public works committee heard Wednesday.

The mild criticism came from Margaret Walton of Walton and Hunter Planning. She is also the author of last year's Agricultural Impact Study.

"I think your policies are relatively old," Ms Walton said. "I think they can use some work."

But the Region is headed in the right direction, insisted Halton's commissioner of planning and public works Pat Murphy.

"I think we're on track. We have more work to do, our policies can be strengthened, but I think we're on track," he said.

Initiatives such as a current golf course study are examples of the Region's determination to protect its agricultural lands, said Mr. Murphy.

And protection is written right into its official plan.

"We actually have very good policies on keeping urban development out of farmland, said Mr. Murphy. "I think we have a very good urban management program."

Ms Walton was before the committee to present the impact study. It had been commissioned by the Federations of Agriculture in York, Peel, Durham and Halton to explore the economic effect of farming in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The study revealed that agriculture is a \$1.3 billion industry employing 34,700 people in the GTA. The report also found that GTA farms are more productive than those in most parts of the country.

Some of that is attributable to the lands themselves, which were identified as being among only five per cent in Canada considered to be prime.

But the news isn't all good. About 150,000 acres of farmland have been wiped out between 1976 and 1996 in the GTA, the report stated.

Some of that occurred before municipalities began strengthening their planning policies, said Ms Walton.

Halton's policies are fine, but they need to be acted on to save farmland, said Mr. Murphy.

"The principle problem in the GTA is a lack of political will to act on the principles already in place," he said.

And that means all levels of government have to get on board, said Milton councillor Barry Lee.

"I'm really proud of what Halton has done in regard to agricultural policies, but we've got to seek some very serious help," he said. "We can't do a whole lot more alone. We need to have provincial policies and federal policies that support what we want to do."

That was also the impression of Peter Lambrick, a farmer and president of the Halton Federation of Agriculture.

"You need the local political will," he said. "In this case we need a lot more provincial political will."

Though the intent had been to use the impact study as a planning tool, Burlington Councillor Joan Loughheed wondered if the committee should go even further.

"I don't want this to be shelved as a resource tool, which usually means it gathers dust," she said. "What should we be talking about in terms of strong action plans?"

She suggested that staff come back with proactive directions to protect area farm-

lands.

The committee also agreed to encourage farming support industry to settle in Halton.

The idea is that farming doesn't exist in a vacuum. Like most industries, it requires back up services to make it a success.

In Halton the productive land is there but "we don't really have enough of a support base to service the farm land," said Mr. Murphy.

So let's get them, said Halton chair Joyce Savoline.

"We want to attract business that will

compliment this," she said. "Whatever it takes to keep the agricultural community a viable one."

Mr. Murphy had only praise for the impact study. "What's important about this is it really sets a good background for the work we'll be doing in Halton," he said.

Got a hot scoop?
Call us with your story ideas at 878-2341, ext. 234.



Who is your Favorite?

Vote in the Canadian Champion's MILTON'S CHOICE AWARDS 2000.



If you have a favorite business, one that gives you great service, great prices or maybe goes "beyond the call of duty", nominate them for The Milton's Choice Award in their category. Drop ballots off at The Canadian Champion office, 191 Main St. E. Voting closes on Tuesday January 25 at 5:00pm. All Ballots will be entered to win a \$100.00 Shopping Spree at Savemore Family Market, 327 Bronte St., Milton. Winners will appear in a special Milton's Choice Awards nominees section.

Best Accountant	Best Daycare Center	Best Funeral Director	Best Pharmacy	Best Sporting Goods Store
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Appliance Store	Best Dance Studio	Best Gas Station	Best Photo Store	Best Sports wear
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Auto Body Shop	Best Delicatessen	Best Giftware	Best Pizza	Best Sandwich
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Automotive Service Department	Best Dentist	Best Golf Club	Best Print Shop	Best Nachos
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Bagel	Best Department Store	Best Hair Salon	Best Pub (roadhouse)	Best Tanning Salon
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Baked Goods	Best Desserts	Best Hamburger	Best Physiotherapist	Best Tire Shop
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Bank or Trust Company	Best Discount Store	Best Hardware Store	Best Pools & Spas Retailer	Best Towing Service
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Banquet Facilities	Best Donuts	Best Heating/Air Conditioner Service	Best Radiator Shop	Best Transmission Shop
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Bicycle Shop	Best Driving School	Best Insurance Company (Broker)	Best Radio Station	Best Travel Agency
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Breakfast	Best Dry Cleaners	Best Jeweller	Best Real Estate Company	Best Veterinarian
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Book Store	Best Electronics Store	Best Kitchen Cabinets	Best Restaurant	Best Video Store
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Building Supplies Store	Best Esthetics	Best Landscaper	Best Roofing Contractor	Best Wings
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Car Service & Repair Centre	Best Equipment Rental	Best Lawyer	Best Security Systems	Best Wine Shop
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Auto Glass Shop	Best Family Restaurant	Best Locksmith	Best Stationary/Office Supplies Store	Best Women's Clothes Store
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Car/Truck Rental	Best Fast Food Restaurant	Best Meat Store	Best Shoe Store	Other
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Best Carpet & Tile Store	Best Farm Market	Best Men's Wear store		
_____	_____	_____		
Best Chinese Restaurant	Best Financial Advisor	Best Muffler shop		
_____	_____	_____		
Best Chiropractor	Best Fish & Chips	Best Nursery		
_____	_____	_____		
Best Coffee	Best Fitness Club	Best Optician		
_____	_____	_____		
Best Computer Store	Best Florist	Best Paint & Wallpaper Store		
_____	_____	_____		
	Best Framing & Art Gallery	Best Pet Food Shop		
	_____	_____		



MILTON'S CHOICE AWARDS

Enter to win
a \$100.00 Shopping Spree at
Savemore Family Market, 327 Bronte St., Milton

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____