

# Town poised to profit from traffic court revenues

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

Milton's share in the revenue stream of Halton-run Provincial Offences Act (POA) courts may turn out to be more of a trickle than a gush.

Downloaded courts will soon be operating in Burlington and Milton, with a skeleton office located in Oakville.

In all, just under 20 employees will man the courts, which will deal primarily with tickets issued under the Provincial Traffic Act, such as speeding.

"This particular one is a good news story," said Nancy Shea-Nicol, the assistant city solicitor in Burlington and chair of the POA steering committee.

She appeared at the Town's October 23 administration and planning committee to outline the interim POA business plan.

Overall, about \$4.2 million in gross revenues are expected from the courts, with about \$2.2 million of that being profit.

Of that, half would go to Halton, with the remainder being split by Oakville, Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills based on assessment numbers.

The money is expected to begin flowing in February, 2001.

As the smallest of those municipalities, Milton will receive the smallest revenue share. But the upcoming population boom in town means Milton's assessment will be on a steady rise over the next 15 years, pointed out Town CAO Mario Belvedere.

"As our assessment increases, by default our revenues will increase," he said. "On a percentage basis, we'll increasingly receive a higher rate of revenue."

That led Councillor Lieven Gevaert to joke "I hope residents will know to pay their tickets with great glee because it goes back into the coffers."

### Expected higher numbers

But Mayor Gord Krantz said the numbers seem smaller than he'd anticipated.

"My recollection is there was more cash in it for Milton," he said. "I wonder if we can expect a little more return on our involvement?"

The numbers in the interim plan are conservative, pointed out Ms Shea-Nicol. "All indications are those (the number of issued tickets) have risen significantly since," she said. "I think overall you'll find the revenue base expands after taking it over."

The Milton court will be staffed by Halton Hills employees.

But hosting a site should result in a larger cash share, said Councillor John Challinor.

"That should be taken into consideration," he said.

Mr. Challinor worried the profits may not be as high as originally estimated. "At first we were quite enthusiastic about hosting it," he said. "And then we were concerned there wouldn't be as much money as we thought."

If the venture turns out to be unprofitable, it can be handed back to the Province or over to another provider, assured Ms Shea-Nicol. But that isn't likely, said Mr. Belvedere.

"This particular business should run at a profit," he said.

If that's true, Councillors should guard against charges of 'cash cow,' noted Councillor Cindy Lunau.

She said residents shouldn't feel the police are aggressively ticketing drivers in order to raise money for the Town.

That's a concern, acknowledged Ms Shea-Nicol.

"It is a sensitive point," she said. "How close do you want to be to the police in a profit-sharing venture like this?"

She said the agreement could be drafted to ensure police aren't pushed into aggressive enforcement in order to rake in more cash.

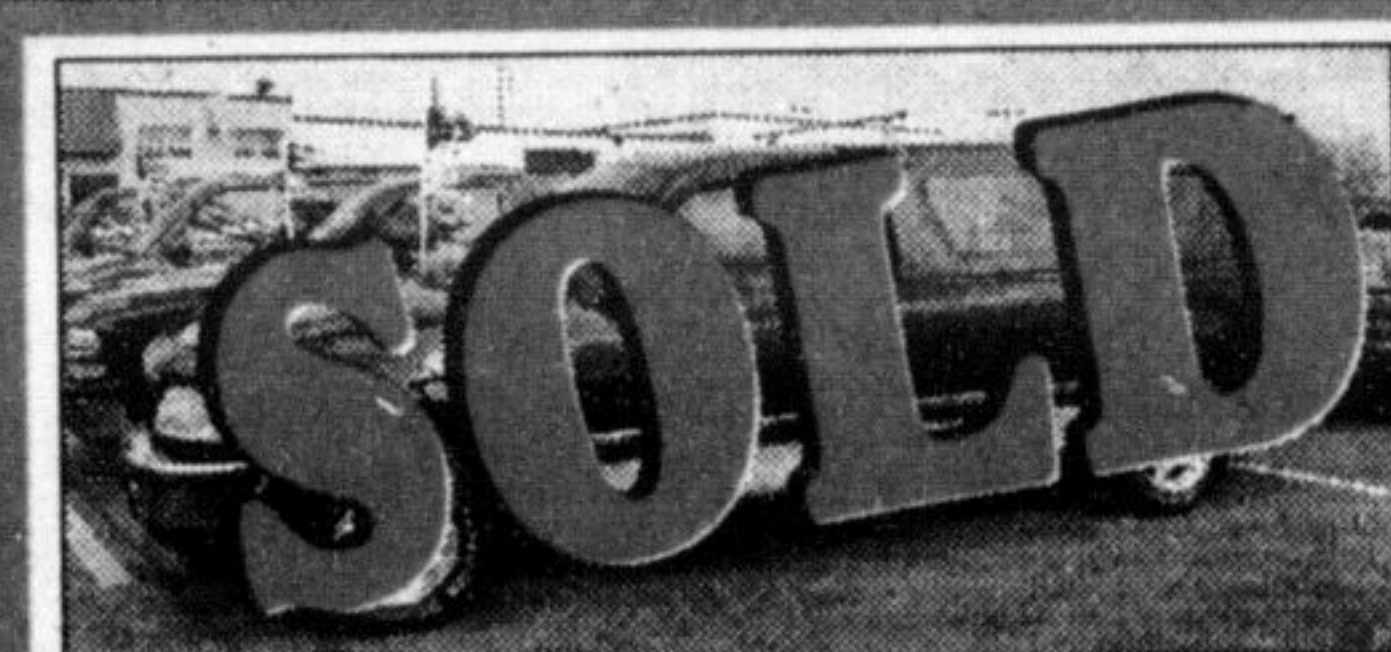
Money shouldn't be the issue, said Ms Lunau.

"The overall intent is to maintain safe communities," she said.

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