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Regional chair seeks re-election

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

When it comes to her election run for the position of Halton Region Chair, incumbent Joyce Savoline would like to get a move on.

That's because traffic and transportation issues are a main thrust of her campaign.

"It's the first thing we need to keep a focus on," said Ms Savoline.

"We're at capacity. We're over capacity."

But speeding up traffic slow-downs entails building partnerships with the Provincial and Federal governments as well as the private sector.

"Nobody can do anything on their own," said Ms Savoline. "It's bigger than that."

Stretching the limits of both roads and public transportation is a primary aim of the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB).

"We're part of the GTA, and therefore part of the GTSB," she said. "That's going to present us with some options."

And Halton has already been looking ahead for solutions.

Progressive in parking

"Halton is the only region is the GTA that thought to ask for commuter parking lots on the (Hwy.) 407," said Ms Savoline. "And we got them. We're ahead of things, but we're quiet about it."

Though politicians themselves have frequently focused on governance issues — or the possibility of merging Halton Region into a mega-city of some kind — it's an issue that seems to have passed the public by, said Ms Savoline.

"Nobody has talked to me about it from the public," she said. "It's not a concern."

She's not convinced the Province will instigate a merger either.

"I think there's a recognition of the kind of stable government we have in the 905 region," she said.

Ms Savoline began public life as a Burlington councillor and became Halton chair in 1997. Though the chair has traditionally been appointed by council, she herself pushed to make it an elected position.

So for the first time since her city days, Ms Savoline is running a political campaign, facing off against challengers Lisa Cooper and Anne Marsden.

But electing the chair is the only responsible thing to do, said Ms Savoline.

"The head of (Regional) council needs to be elected and accountable to the public," she said.

"It's time in the evolution of our Region, where the Province has given us vast amounts of responsibility."

She's proud of her record at the Region, which includes projects such as the castiron watermain replacement program, and the awarding of back-to-back Triple A credit ratings.

A focus on small business and expanding trade territory also helps Halton stay ahead of the pack, said Ms Savoline, who feels there are plenty of opportunities and challenges ahead.

"I still really love the job," she said. "I feel I have a lot to offer."