

# Region gives thumbs up to a new Strategic Plan

By RICHARD VIVIAN  
The Champion

Following a number of wording changes to strengthen its position and allay public concerns, regional council approved a new Strategic Plan Wednesday.

"A lot of time — staff's and council's — has gone into developing this document. Though councillors do not all agree on everything in it, this does represent the consensus," said Oakville Councillor Keith Bird.

The plan provides regional staff with a guideline of goals and principles on which to base recommendations to council, budgets and management decisions.

Themes laid out in the plan include smart growth and livability, mobility and prosperity, services to people, accountable and responsible government, and accessible and resourceful government.

Before unanimous approval of the plan was received, council heard from a series of citizens' groups expressing concern over the wording of the document.

President of Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources Barbara Halsall said she wasn't satisfied with general terminology

used under the smart growth and livability theme. Her concern was that exploring business opportunities by extracting "energy from waste" at closed landfill sites could lead to environmentally-damaging incineration practices.

"If your intent is to capture methane, then we're all for it. But the terms used leave it open to incineration," she told council.

Suggesting the collection of methane was the intent of the wording, council amended the action to exclude incineration from possible energy sources.

### Group complains plan isn't specific enough

Oakvillegreen, a non-profit conservation group, also challenged the "lack of specifics" in the plan.

While each goal outlined contains progress indicators, a starting point is needed on which to base comparisons and draw conclusions, said Mike Lansdown, Oakvillegreen vice-president. Specific timelines would also aid in the measure of success, he added.

"How do you know if you actually accomplish something unless you say when you want to accomplish it by?" he asked. "The overall timeline of this plan needs to be addressed."

But according to Karen

Maxwell, the Region's strategic planning and policy director, time-lines will be established through discussions with department heads as the 2002 annual budget is developed.

Milton group Residents Affected by Intermodal Lines (RAIL) also sought to see specific wording that would express the Region's disapproval of the proposed CN intermodal facility in Milton.

"Whether or not you can do anything (to prevent the intermodal facility), it's important for people to know you're opposed," said Rita Post, RAIL chair.

The creation of the proposed intermodal facility, she suggested, would go against goals in the plan such as reducing smog, the inclusion of citizens' health in planning issues, the protection of rural lands, and reduction of traffic congestion.

"If CN comes in, this is a complete waste of time," she argued.

But council was reluctant to alter the strategic plan to refer to the intermodal facility because, as suggested by Regional Chair Joyce Savoline, it's not something that should be included. The most appropriate place for such statements, she added, would be the Region's Official Plan — scheduled for review in the near future.

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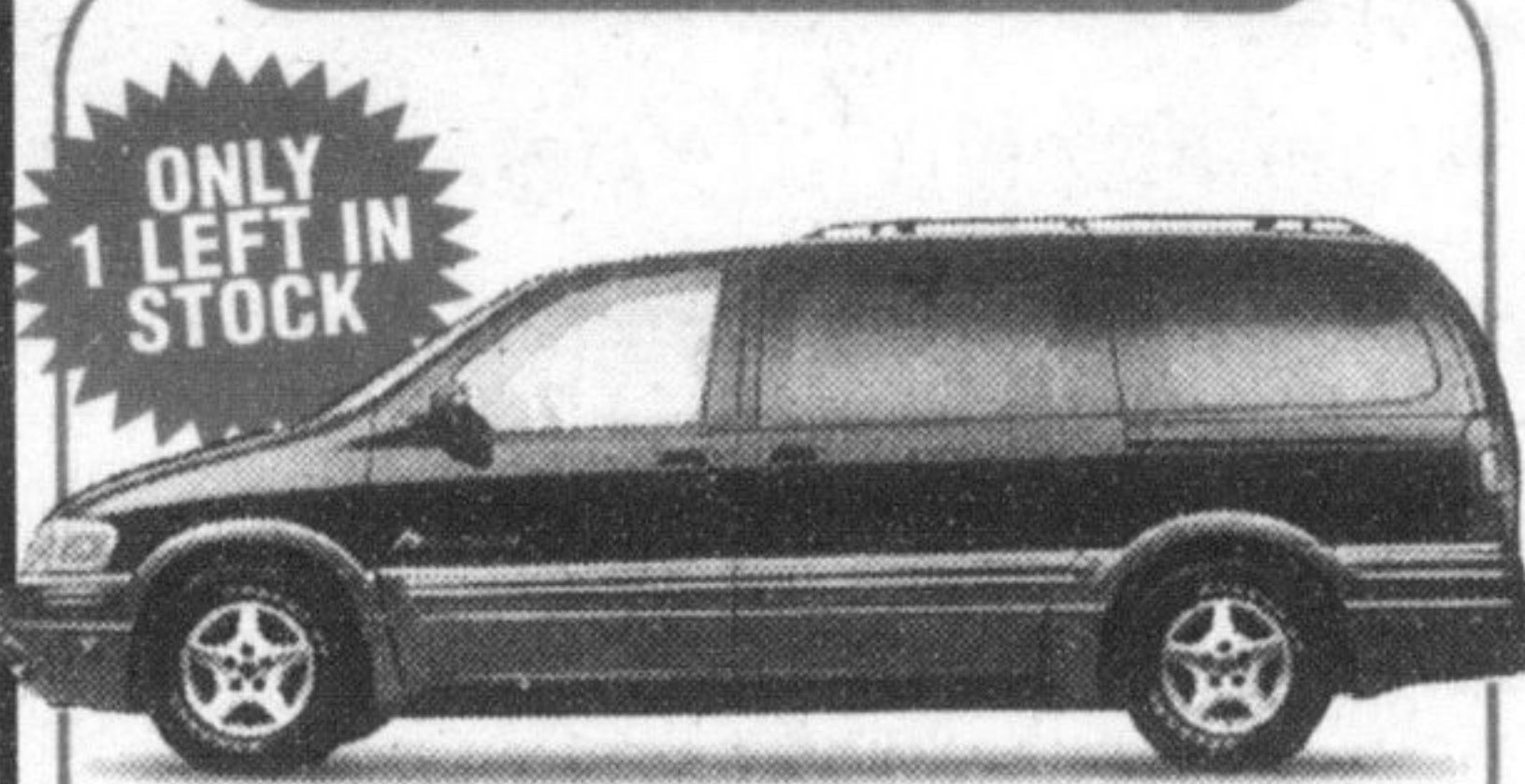
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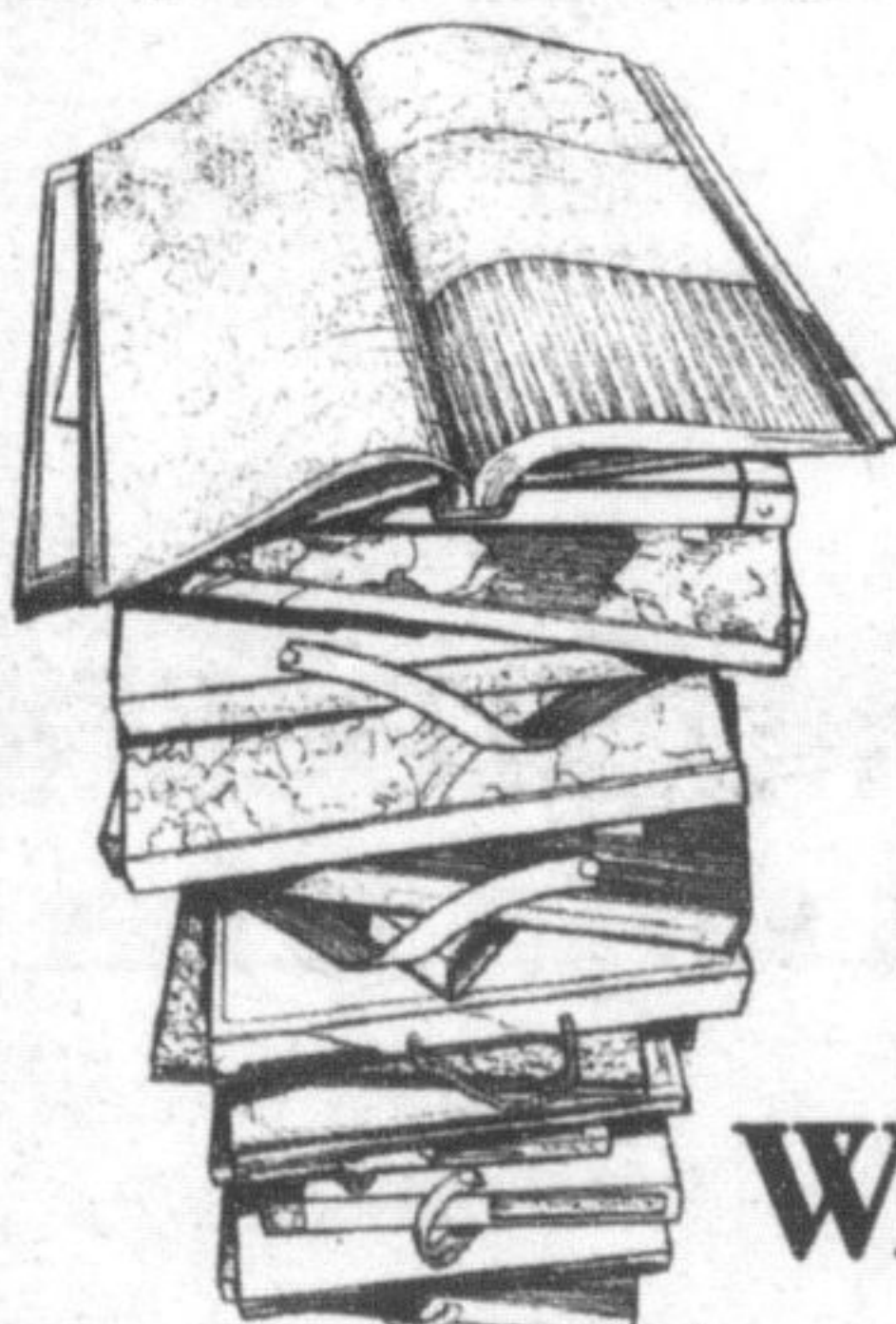
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