

ESAC asks Region to assist in fighting increasing costs of long-term care

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**
The Champion

With the recent rise in long-term-care fees, seniors and their families have been feeling the pinch, Halton's health and social services committee heard last Tuesday.

Halton's Elderly Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) presented information outlining its concerns with the increases and asked the committee for a hand in explaining the hardships to the Province.

"If you haven't seen people first-hand, as I have, you can't really picture how traumatic even a small increase can be for some of these families," remarked Allan Klarer, speaking on behalf of ESAC.

After hearing from ESAC, the committee endorsed a motion that would see the Regional chair write the minister of health in an effort to soften the impact of future fee increases on seniors.

The letter would suggest that increases to long-term-care fees be restricted to the cost of service and that those increases be spread on a percentage basis throughout the various service levels. It would further recommend the ministry better educate the public on where increased fees would be utilized.

Since a 7 per cent fee increase came into effect last month, many seniors and their families have had difficulty coping, said Mr. Klarer. The increase is part of a three-year phasing process, expected to reach 15 per cent in total.

The increase was first proposed by the Province this past summer as a 15 per cent lump sum, but later changed.

In its presentation to the committee, ESAC sought to have the letter indicate increases should be limited to "the traditional 2 per cent," and that increased funds be focused on nursing, personal care, raw food, programming and supportive care.

Burlington Councillor Jack Dennison expressed an uneasiness with both items and they were ultimately removed from the motion.

"Should working people be further subsidizing for those who can afford to pay? Is it fair if some people can afford to pay for themselves?" the councillor asked of the 2 per cent increase cap.

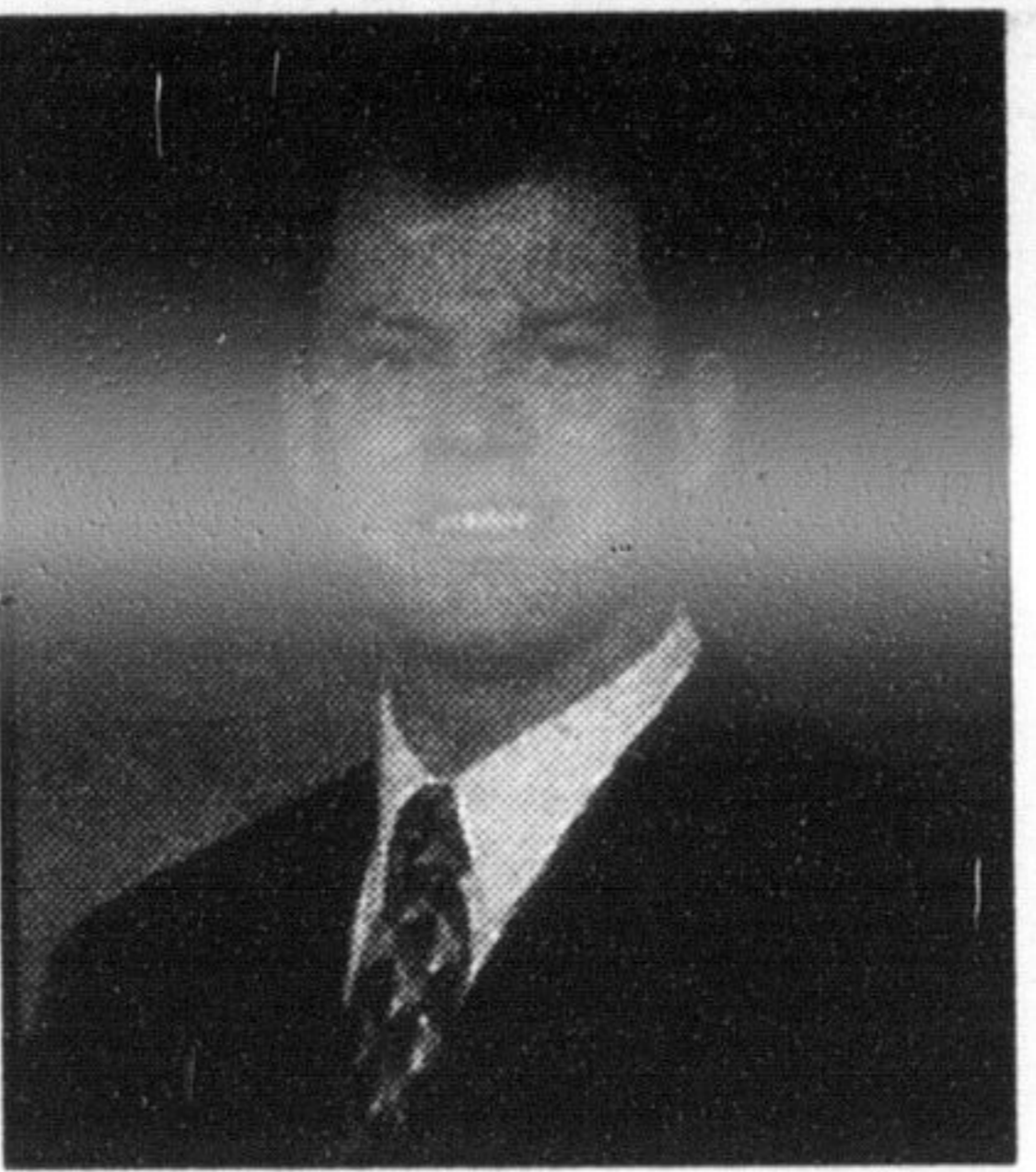
Regional council hasn't addressed the issue at this time, but is expected to do so tomorrow.

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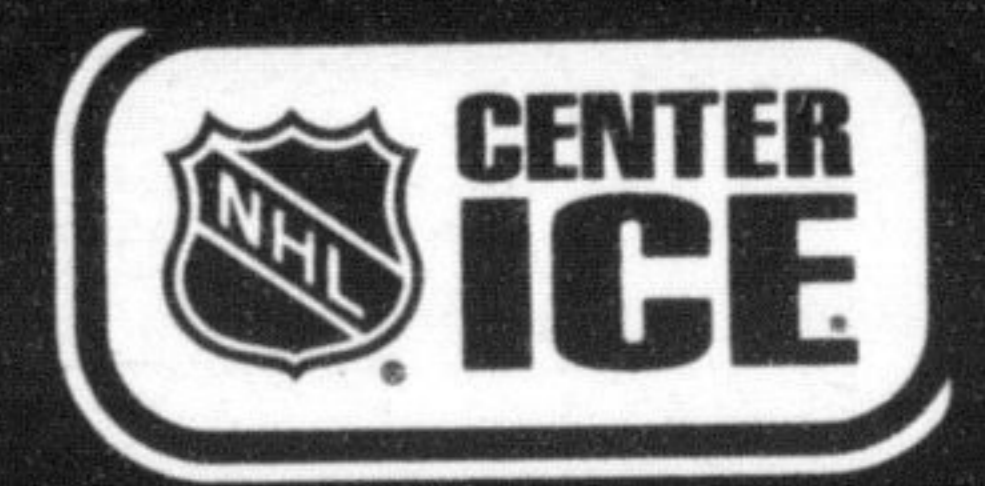
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