

Region says it will seek input from the public in contracting study

By JASON MISNER
The Champion

In an attempt to quash concerns, Halton Region says there will be public consultation into a study that will determine if contracting out services at its long-term care facilities is cost-efficient.

Adelina Urbanski, Halton's commissioner of social and community services, said there will be an "opportunity for various forms of input" into the four- to six-month long organizational structure study.

"Because we're so early in the process, nothing has been outlined yet," she said. "Halton does have quite a history of consultation."

The Region has come under fire for the organizational study as well for the decision to lay off four positions in hairdressing and foot care, effective January 2.

Residents of Allendale and their families, and the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU) representing the 300-plus Allendale employees said they're particularly worried the study won't include their opinions about contracting out.

The study is being undertaken because Halton will be opening two more long-term care facilities — in addition to the Allendale site on Ontario Street South — in Oakville and Burlington in the next year or so.

The departments being considered for contracting out are laundry, maintenance and housekeeping.

Ms Urbanski said she thinks there's a misperception that decisions about contracting out services have been made. She stressed that's not the case.

"Is it going to be all smoke and mirrors?"

BRENDA CALL

"We're early in the throes of this," she said, noting there will be a staff meeting in about two weeks to start identifying the study process.

Brenda Call, whose 84-year-old mother is a resident of Allendale, said she's happy to hear the Region said it will consult the public as part of the study.

"We're certainly going to be more informed about how my mother is going to be taken care of," said Ms Call, an Oakville resident. "This is the only way to go."

She just hopes that public consultation will be legitimate.

"Is it going to be all smoke and mirrors?" she asked.

Legitimacy is also what Terry Moore, representative of the OPSEU for Allendale, hopes for when it comes to public input.

"I'm glad they're saying that and I think the more public, the better," he said.

But he said he questions that because there was no public input sought before the hairdressing and foot-care position lay-offs were announced.

"The proof is in the pudding for these things," he said. "I remain skeptical this is a true investigation."

Jason Misner can be reached at jmisner@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Q: Why did the chicken cross the road?



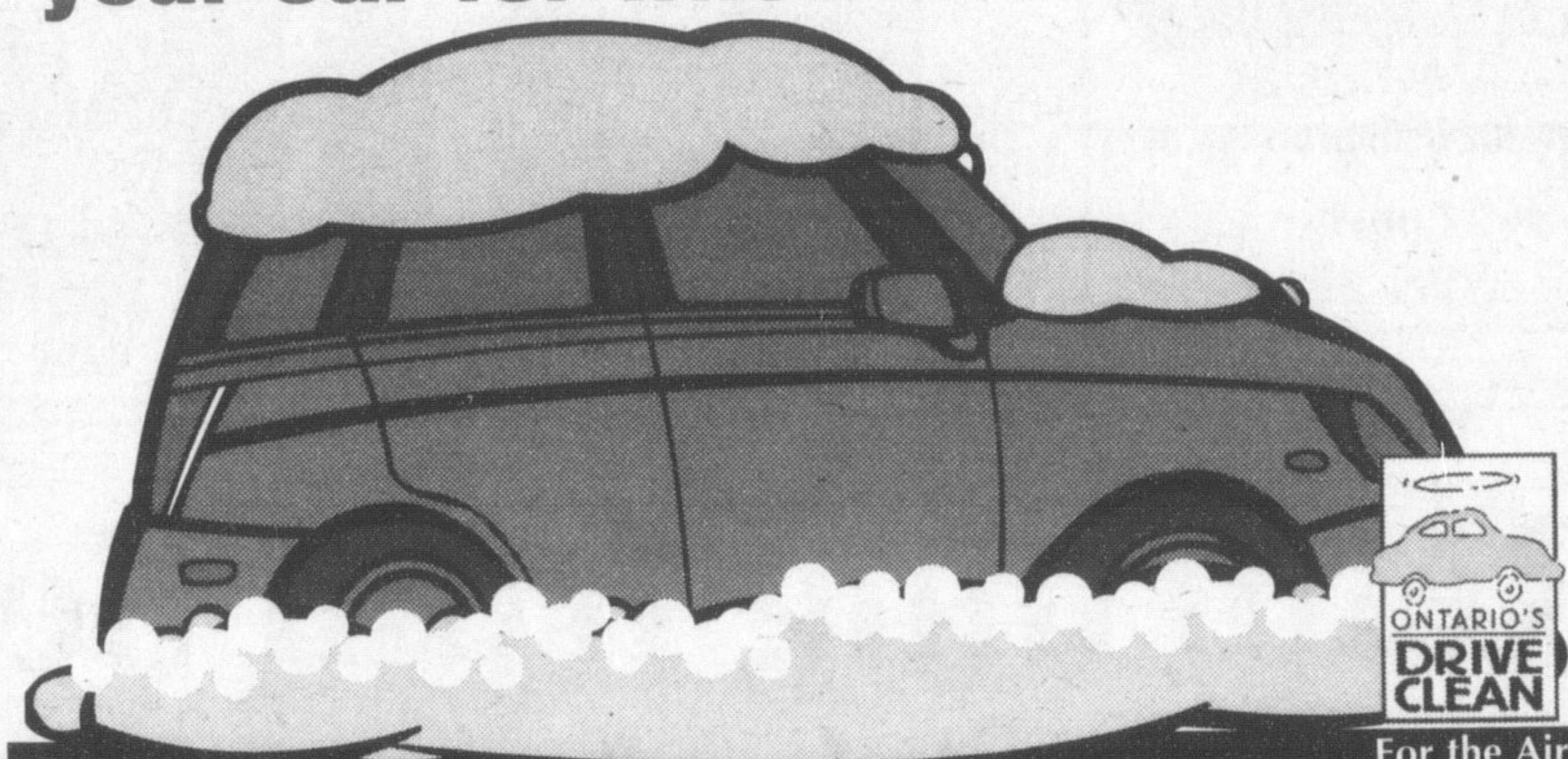
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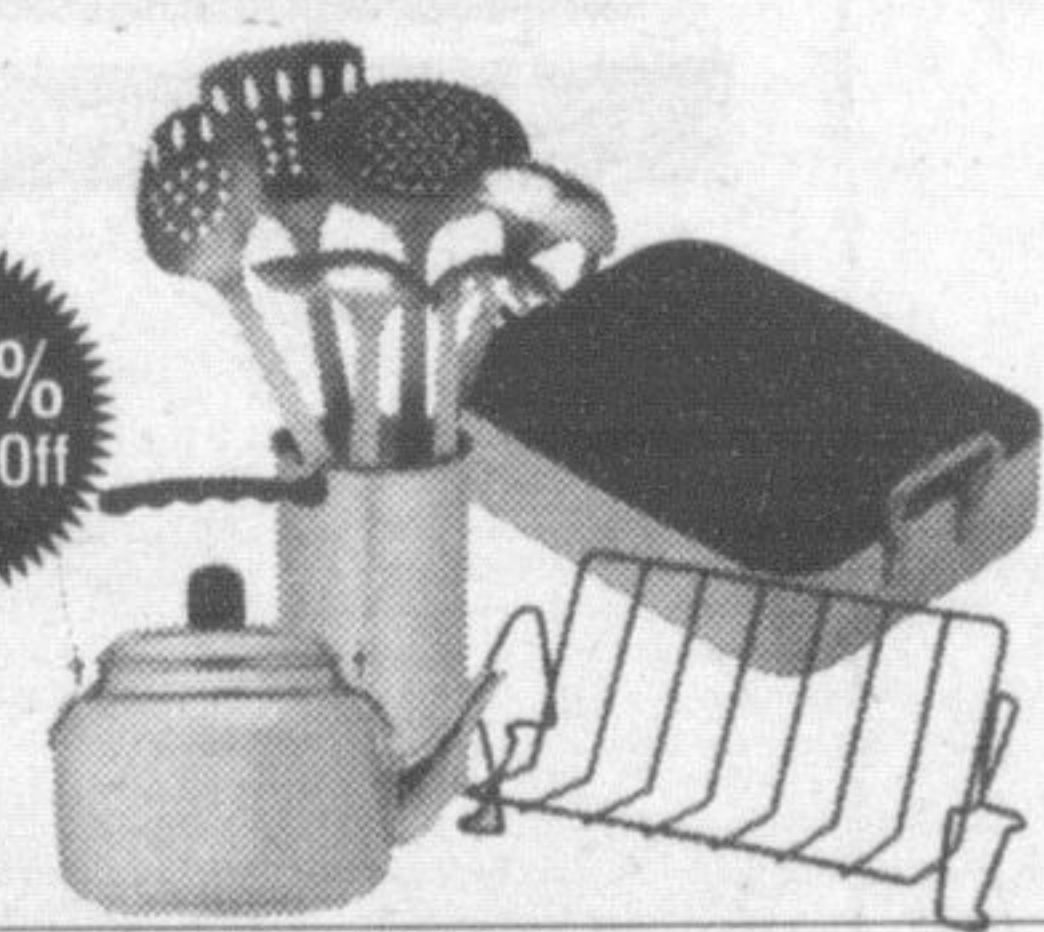
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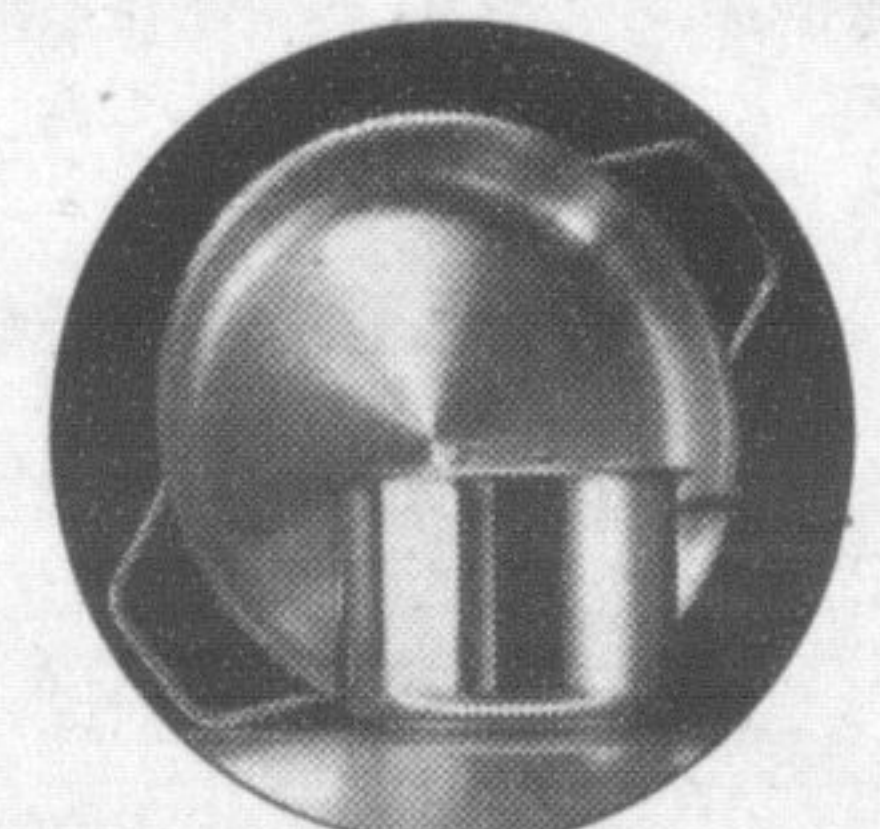


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Volunteers are needed to help on parade day

Santa Claus is coming to town... sooner than you may think.

The jolly old fellow will appear in Milton's Santa Claus Parade November 23. And plans are underway to make the 2003 parade the best ever.

This year's theme is: All I want for Christmas is...?

Of course, if you ask committee members what they'd like, they'd say help on the committee and more volunteers on the day of the parade.

Organizing an event like the annual parade takes hundreds of hours of volun-

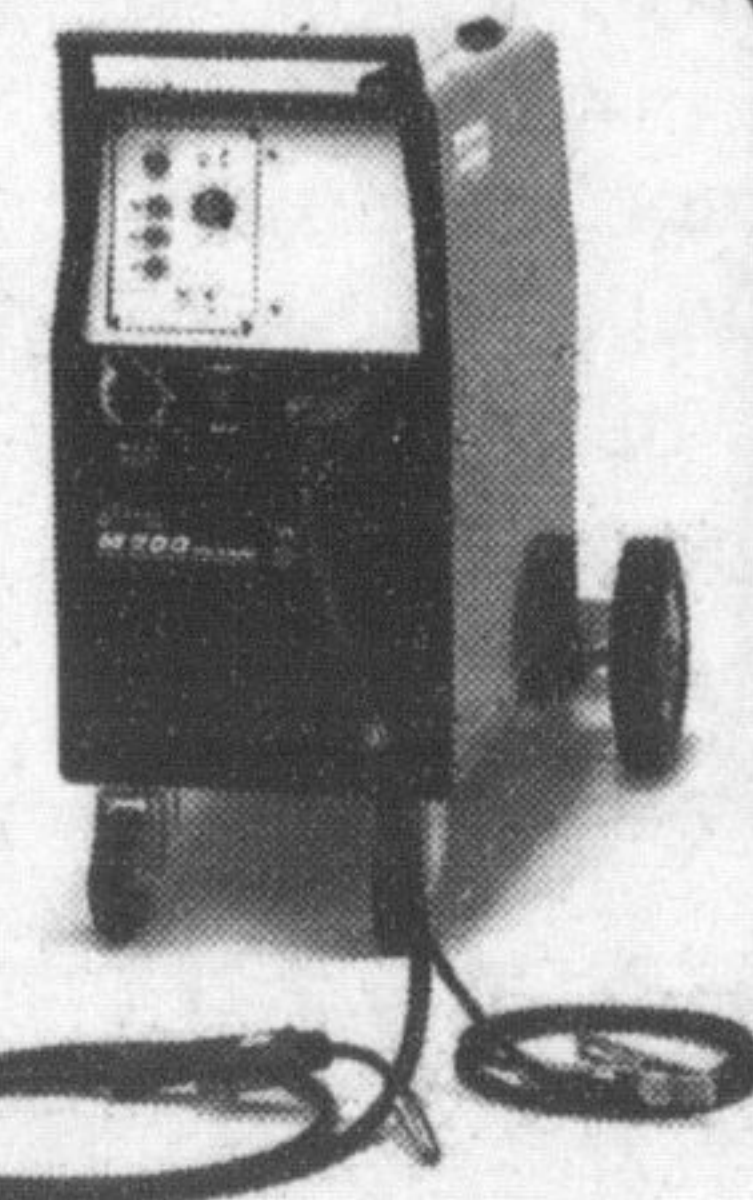
ter work. The current committee is made up of representatives of service clubs, community groups, organizations and individuals with help from the Town of Milton.

On the day of the parade, there's a need for up to 100 volunteers to be clowns, carry banners and hand out stuff. It qualifies for community service hours students need to graduate.

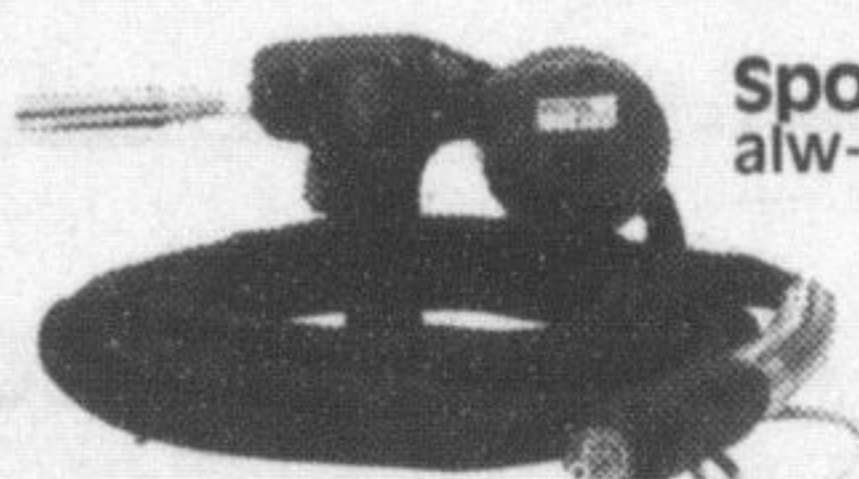
If you're interested in getting involved, call committee chair Laura McKee at (905) 878-6347 or co-chair Paul Scherer at (905) 691-4288.

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