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A METROLAND COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER VOL. 145 NO. 53 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2004 \$1.00 (GST included) 52 PAGES "Using Communication to Build Better Communities"

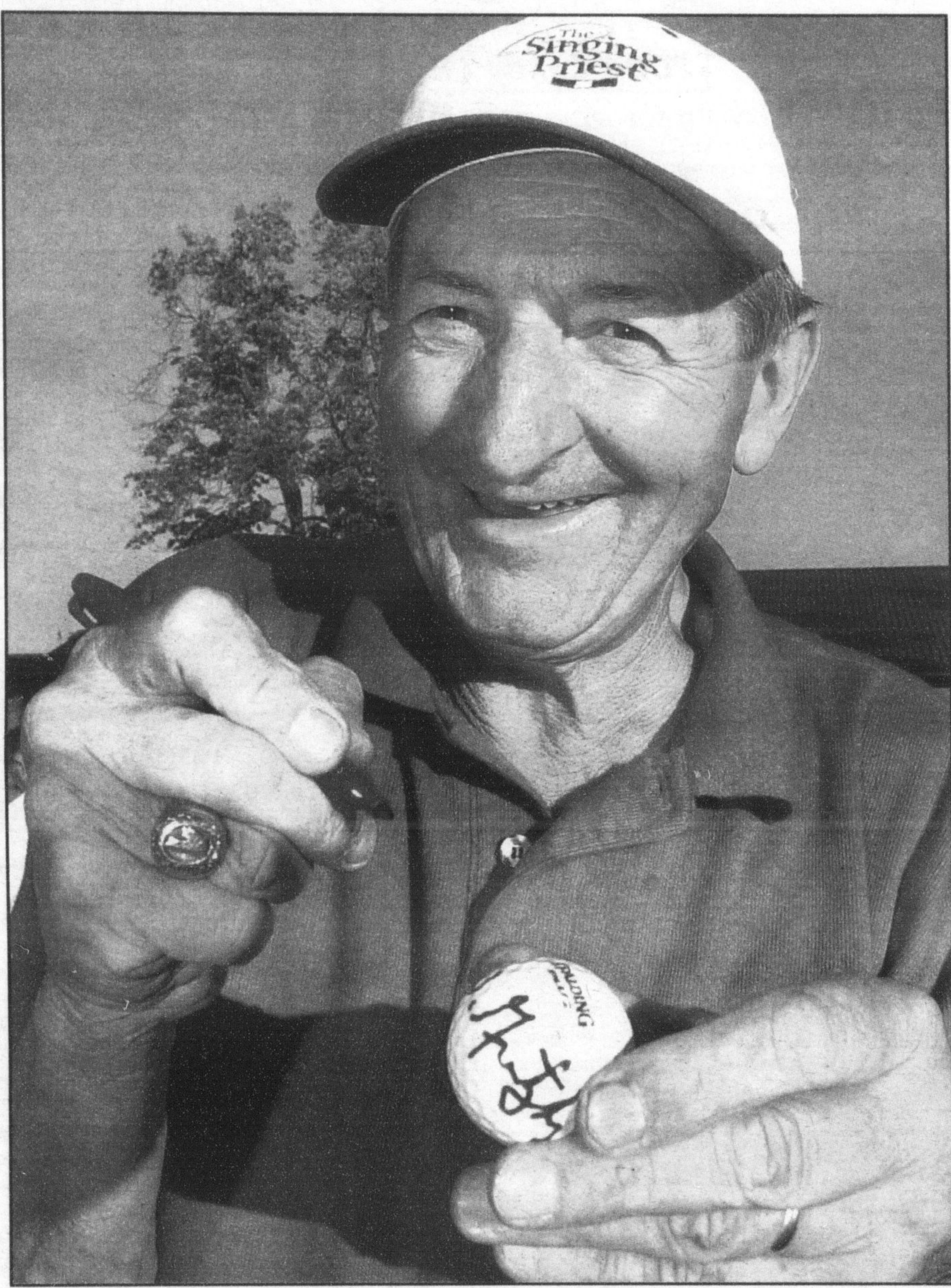


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

On the ball

Perhaps the most famous hockey dad, Walter Gretzky was kept busy signing golf balls during Friday's Mayor's Golf Tournament for the United Way of Milton at Granite Ridge Golf Club. See more photos from the event on page 7.

Province's growth plan comes under fire at meeting

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

Dozens of Halton residents voiced their thoughts and concerns on the Province's recently-released growth management strategy at a public forum Thursday night.

About 200 people attended the meeting that looked at the discussion paper, Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future, a document aimed at stopping urban sprawl and focusing compact development on 11 priority urban centres and 15 emerging urban centres.

Milton's core has been listed as an emerging urban centre, which means the Province wants future growth to be concentrated in this area, steering developers away from agricultural land and hamlets.

Halton Director of Planning and Transportation Jane Clohecy presented regional staff's initial thoughts on the discussion paper, which included a mix of praise and criticism.

She said for the most part, the provincial plan is in sync with Halton's approach to growth management of existing urban areas, such as making sure new development bears the cost of growth.

But, she said the future growth area that the Province has identified, a strip running across southern Ontario that encompasses Halton, is unacceptable.

"The main concern is that they've identified too much urban land within those boundaries for a 30-year plan," she said. "There's really no planning rationale."

Dave McKay of the Burlington Sustainable Development Committee said he agrees with regional staff on their future growth area worries.

"I have real concerns about these possible growth areas expanding our urban boundaries," he said. "At some point, we

have to face limits — that this area is to capacity."

Hannah Evans of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal said the Province is assessing these areas for their capacity to accommodate growth.

"We're not suggesting that everything in the (future growth area) be paved over," she said.

She added that this area could take pressure off the need to expand urban boundaries, but that may still happen down the road.

Mike Grimwood of the Milton Rural Residents Association (MRRRA) said the citizens' group doesn't agree with the notion that growth is necessary for economic success.

The MRRRA submitted several pages of comments to the Region and the Province that emphasize growth should be planned for areas outside southwestern Ontario, such as places that have a lack of econom-

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