

Agriculture groups hoping for greenbelt delay

Say that more time is needed for consultation and review

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**

The Champion

The Halton and Ontario federations of agriculture are calling on the Province to delay the proposed greenbelt legislation, allowing more time for consultation and review.

Local farmer Bert Andrews, representing both organizations, presented a list of recommendations on the greenbelt to the Greater Toronto Area Countryside Mayors' Alliance at the Ramada Inn January 21.

The plan aims to create a permanent countryside in the Golden Horseshoe region, swathing through Halton. It would encompass the Niagara Escarpment Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and also protect natural abutting features, cov-

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BERT ANDREWS

ering about 1.8-million acres from Niagara Falls to Peterborough. Mr. Andrews told the mayors group, which includes Milton Mayor Gord Krantz and Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette, that

there hasn't been adequate time allotted to comment on the implications of creating a greenbelt.

"Each landowner deserves to be consulted," he said. "More time is needed to get the details right. We would recommend an additional year to get the science and consultation with each landowner completed."

While Mr. Krantz said he has no problem with the legislation being delayed, he wasn't optimistic that the Province would feel the same way, noting he thinks it'll "push it through."

Mr. Andrews said the delay is also needed to get the science right in mapping the greenbelt.

"The greenbelt lines need to follow scientific principles associated with significant environmental features," he said. "At present, many of the lines appear to be drawn using political science. An explanation must be given to each landowner explaining why the lines are placed in a particular spot."

He expressed concerns on the impact the greenbelt could have on farm equity, noting every farmer in his area expects his property value to be cut in half if the greenbelt legislation goes through, which could lead to bankruptcy and farmers losing their land. "If farmland is greenbelted, an unbiased farmland value monitoring system must be in place," he said. "Farmers must be compensated for their loss in fair market value of their farmland as their borrowing capacity and pension plans will be reduced."

Mr. Andrews also said a local, provincial and Canadian food supply vision needs to be developed to ensure farm viability.

"If farmers are viable, land will be kept green," he noted. "The recommendation is for each farm commodity or sector to put forward what is needed for that commodity to be viable."

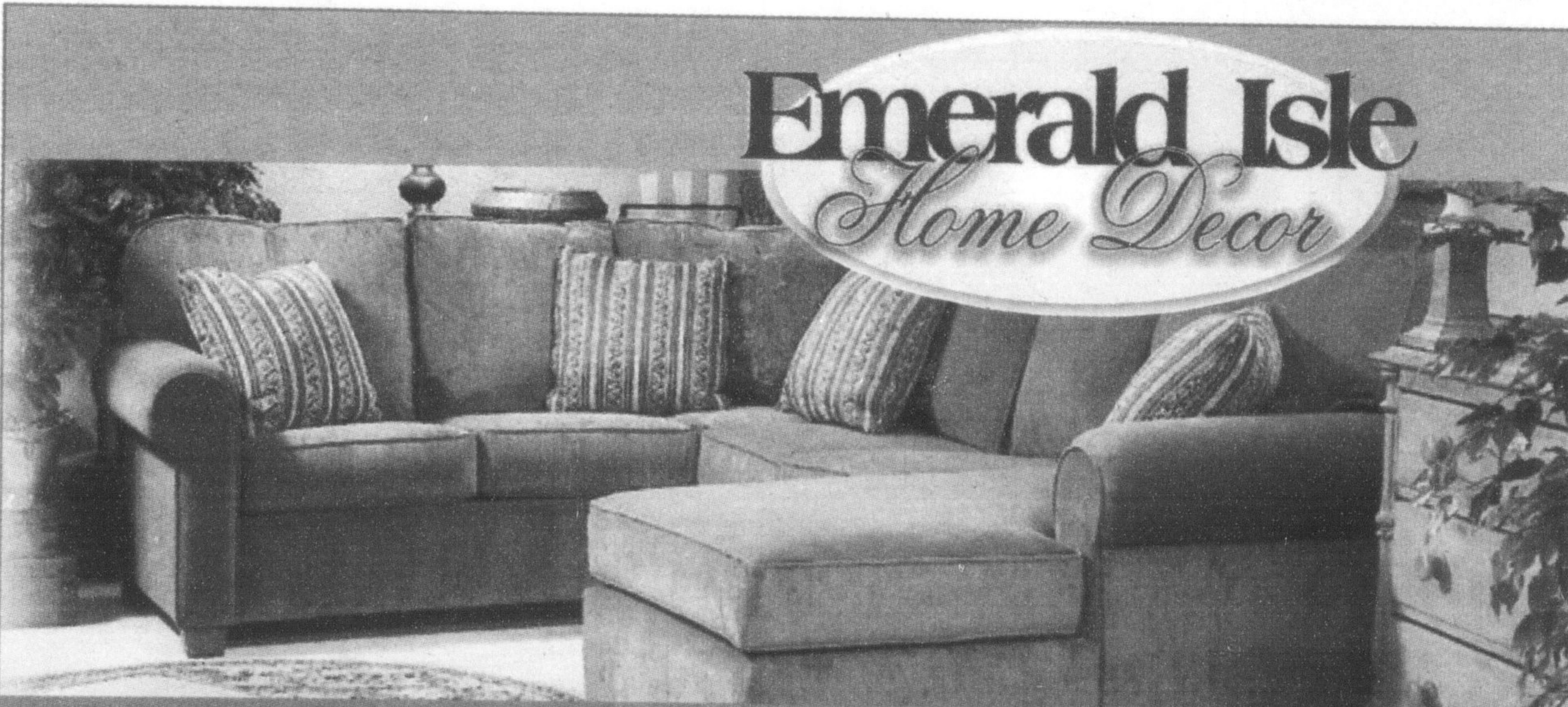
He added that an adjudication system also needs to be put in place for matters such as boundary science.

"The adjudicators need to be knowledgeable agronomists and farmers," Mr. Andrews said.

He went on to urge the countryside mayors to be strong in implementing their official plans to keep the countryside green.

Mr. Krantz said he thinks in bringing forward the greenbelt plan, the Province is telling municipalities that they haven't administered their official plans well, which he noted just isn't true in Halton.

• see PROTECTION on page 9



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