

# Builders may be 'strongly encouraged' to support hospital

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By Tim Foran  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Prevented by provincial legislation from charging developers for the costs of new and expanded hospitals, a Regional committee is recommending residential homebuilders be "strongly encouraged" to pay a \$1,000 voluntary contribution for every unit they build.

"Developers are all saying, 'We're helping build a complete community.' Well, this is a small cost (toward that effort)," said Milton Regional Councillor Colin Best at council's health and social services committee meeting Tuesday morning. The recommendation will go to council for approval Wednesday.

Any money collected would be used to help cover the costs of hospital growth in Halton Region.

Currently, three hospitals in the region need improvements. Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington is asking for provincial approval to start a \$180 million expansion. Halton Healthcare Services is waiting to

start construction of a new Oakville hospital, and is also hoping for the Province to give the go-ahead to an expansion of its hospital in Milton. However, the corporation hasn't released publicly estimates on how much those two projects would cost.

Typically, the Province pays 70 per cent of the capital costs for new or expanded hospitals, with 30 per cent to be picked up by what's called the local share — a combination of fundraising and municipal contributions in many instances.

The request for developers to chip in to the local share will help make up for the fact the current provincial government has refused to reverse a 1997 change to the Development Charges Act that forbid municipalities from collecting growth-related hospital costs, said Regional Chairman Gary Carr, who introduced the motion at Tuesday's meeting.

Stephen Dupuis, president of the developers' lobby group BILD, was less than enthused at the Halton committee's recommendation.

"The (building) industry just loathes voluntary contributions, which often aren't voluntary," Dupuis said.

"Is this hospital only for people who buy new homes? Of course not," Dupuis added. "Hospitals — that's a community-wide, region-wide service."

Dupuis said the industry has no tolerance for more costs in the current economic climate, especially in Halton where residential developers are already being charged extremely high rates.

Facing immediate infrastructure pressures, Halton Region finalized a financing plan last winter adding an additional

\$10,000 in costs to residential developers on top of the \$29,000 they pay in development charges. Those regional costs are on top of other charges, including about \$12,000 per home in fast-growing Milton and \$2,000 in provincial education charges.

But Best said the developers have recently caught a break, as the Region has agreed to postpone a major roads project — Trafalgar Road north of Hwy. 401 — that will reduce the costs developers in Milton and north Oakville pay by \$1,600.

"That's pretty wonky math," responded Dupuis. "It (those charges) wasn't there before. All of a sudden, we're enriched?"

## No verdict yet in hit, run case

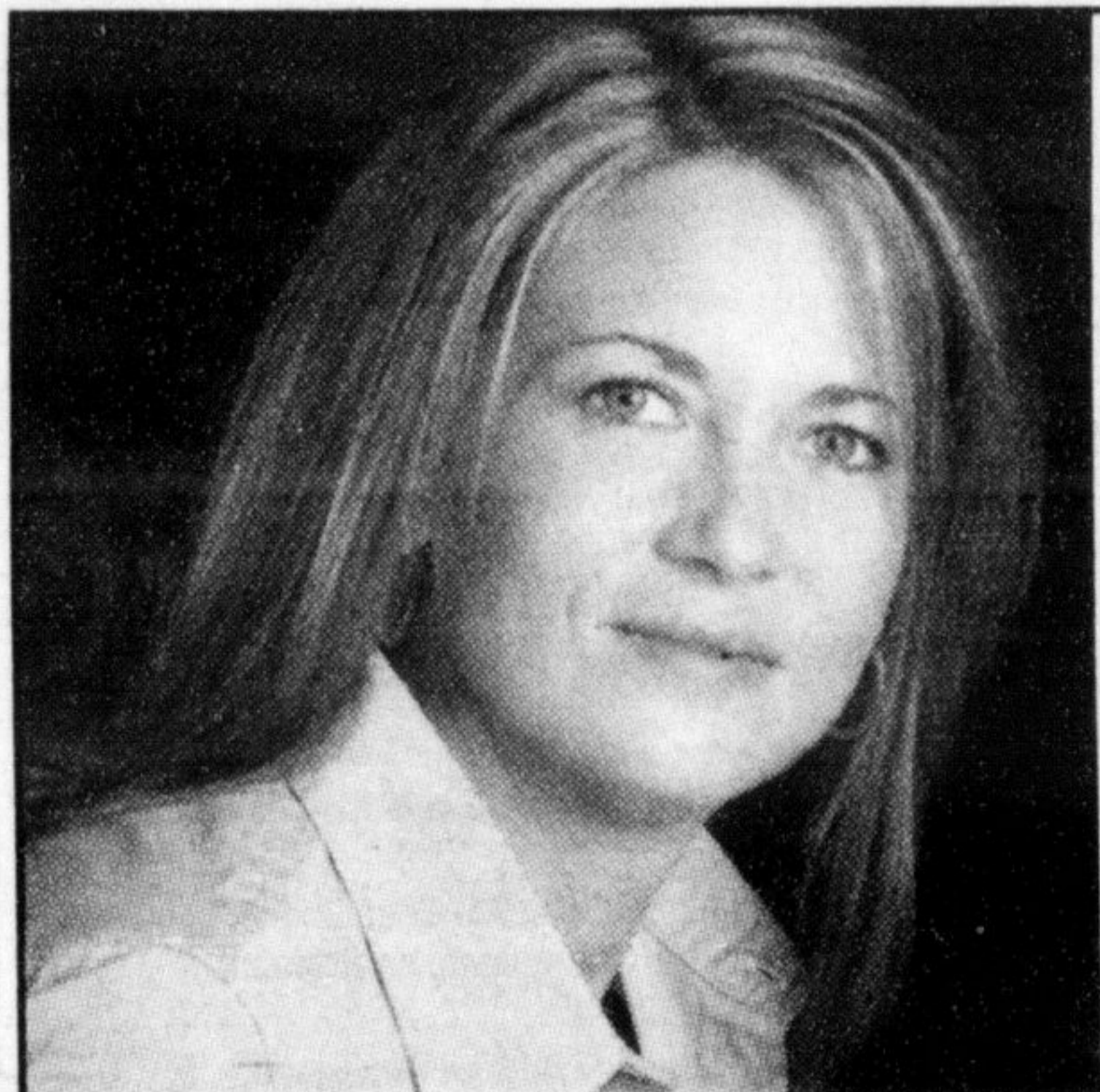
The verdict in the hit-and-run case that claimed the life of a Milton teen has been delayed.

It had been expected Wednesday morning.

However, Justice Joseph Fragomeni requested the matter be put over to June 29 at 10 a.m. at Superior Court of Justice in Milton after the trial over which he's current-

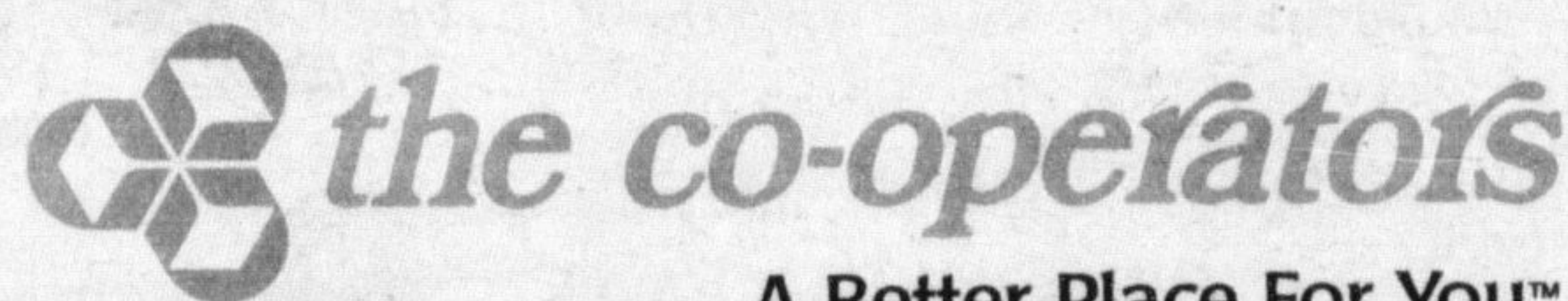
ly presiding went longer than expected, said the accused's lawyer, Paul Stunt.

Stephen Alchin, 36, of Halton Hills pleaded not guilty to leaving the scene of an accident after 18-year-old Lauren Cooper, a Milton District High School student, was struck from behind the night of July 13, 2006 while rollerblading near Second Line and No. 15 Sideroad in Nassagaweya.



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