

# Council tries to weaken staffs' power in severances

By LOB KELLY

A resolution passed by Milton council Monday night will be used at regional council today as local officials attempt to stave off what they see as a dangerous concentration of power.

Milton councillors hold out little hope of winning the regional battle, however.

Reforms to the controversial regional land division committee (LDC) are expected to pass regional council today (Wednesday). Included in that reform package is the delegation of certain powers formerly exercised by LDC to the regional planning director, currently Rash Mohammed.

Under the new rules, Mr. Mohammed will judge any land severance proposals that are not disputed. Disputed proposals will be dealt with by LDC, which is made up of

citizens chosen by regional council.

Notice of the planning director's decisions will be relayed to regional council under the new guidelines, but it will be notice after the fact.

Milton council passed a motion calling for LDC to deal with all applications, and tacked on an amendment requiring regional councillors to scrutinize any proposed appeals of severance decisions.

Both Mr. Mohammed and another regional staff member, legal services director Mark Meneray, will be entitled to launch appeals if committee recommendations pass Halton council.

Ward 3 councillor Barry Lee proposed the blocking motion at Milton council. While acknowledging LDC "shortcomings in the past, at least its been reasonably democratic."

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**-- Rick Day**

"There's sort of an elementary principle in Canadian law that you can't delegate legislative powers to an administrative official," councillor Rick Day said. "In this case it seems to me putting that kind of authority

in the hands of one person leaves the system open to abuse."

Mr. Day characterized some Halton land division procedures as "immature" and chastised regional staff for expecting people to

"slavishly" interpret official land use plans.

The councillor also challenged the "mind-boggling hypocrisy" of Halton's expressed interest in saving farmland while at the same time backing major Milton growth studies.

Last week the regional planning and public works committee supported in principle building a \$100-million pipeline from Lake Ontario to fuel a Milton population expansion of at least 40,000 people.

Mr. Day slammed Halton for making citizens "jump through hoops" for individual land severances, when the region plans on putting "thousands of homes" onto currently vacant land.

"If the region is the one we have to look to to save farmland, then we're all going to starve to death," Mr. Day concluded.

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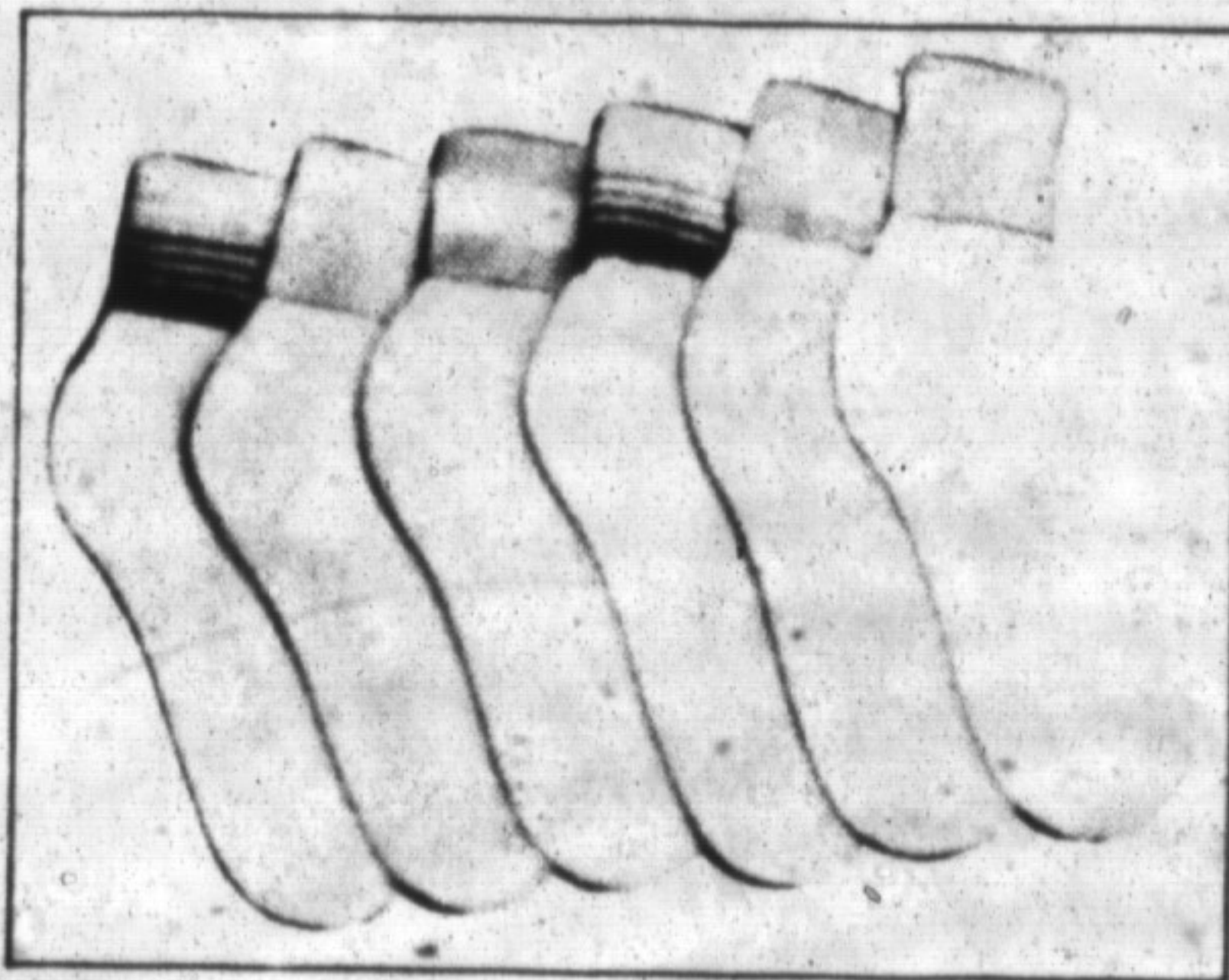
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