

## Region squawks but passes child-care study

By ROB KELLY

When Oakville's Kevin Flynn suggested regional council should support the principles behind Halton's new child-care study with a minimum of debate, other councillors angrily told him they would debate what they pleased.

"I congratulate councillor Flynn in his new venture, manufacturing and selling muzzles," Oakville councillor Fred Oliver said. "I didn't know we weren't supposed to express our opinions. I will as long as I'm here."

Burlington Mayor Roly Bird said he refused to be dictated to in the name of some "lofty principles. I would hope that we do not legislate out people looking after their own children."

The region's mammoth child-care study, released last week, is an in-depth sounding of Halton's child care system. Replete with reams of figures, it documents the attitudes of parents, their hopes, the current load on child-care systems and predictions for the future.

Halton social services director Bonnie Ewart is developing a strategy to make use of the data, and is expected to present that plan to council in the fall.

Councillors are worried about how much those plans will cost, however, and who will pay for any service increases. That was on Mr.

Bird's mind.

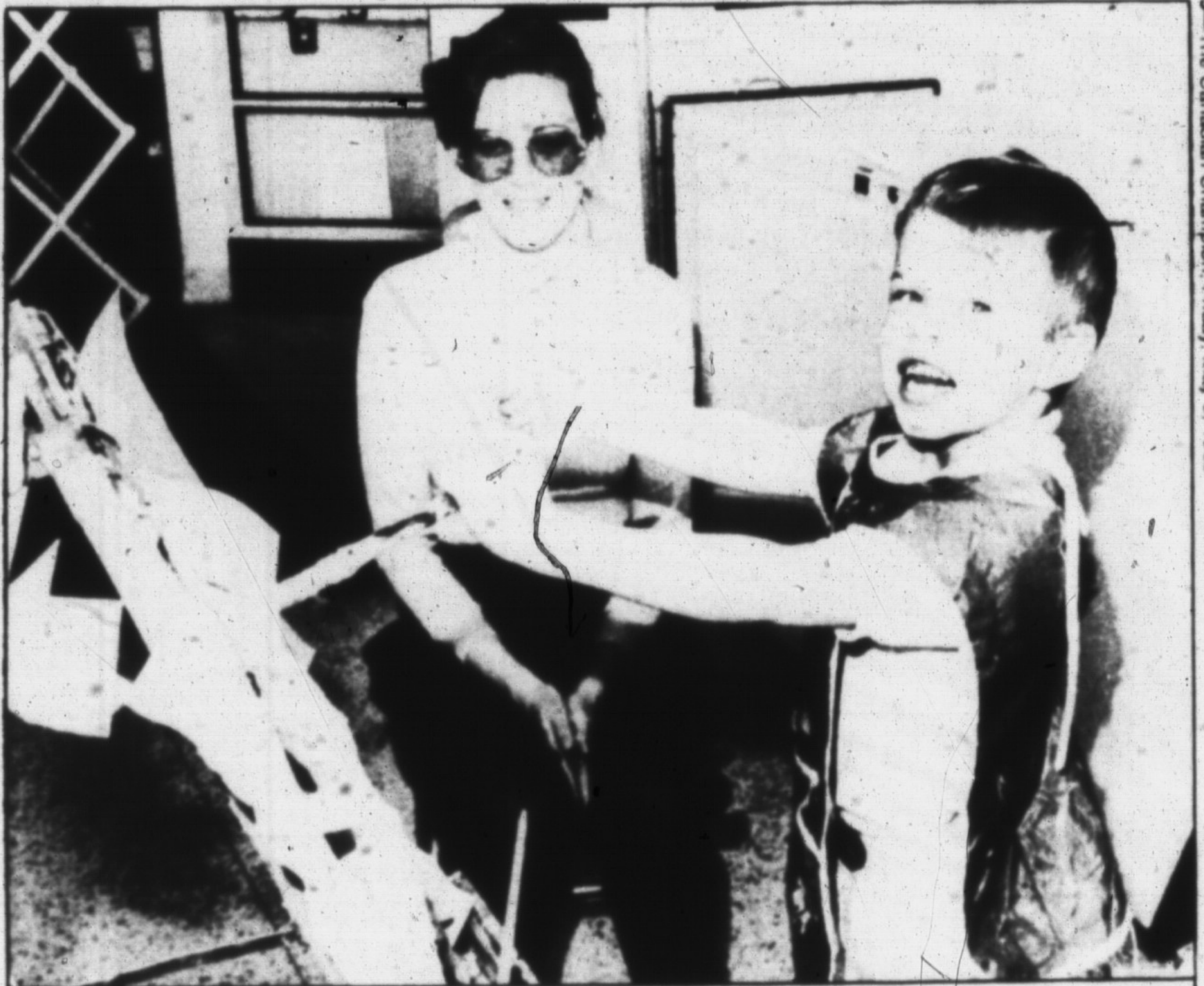
"If we looked at all the policy we implemented and attached a price tag to that... the money's got to come from somewhere. I can't understand the mentality of people who do (studies) like this. Later they're going to have a cost. I guess that worries me. All this policy we are implementing has to come from somebody's pocket."

Burlington councillor Walter Mulkeiwich, who praised the report as "a real significant document," acknowledged that any Halton plans will "be contingent on the actions and leadership of the senior levels of government," meaning contingent on financial grants from those levels.

Mr. Mulkeiwich quibbled with Mayor Bird's assertion that the report was merely based on "lofty principles. This report is practical, pragmatic information on which to make decisions."

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz said he was "not in favour of child care being totally put on the property tax base," which is the only tax regional government can collect.

Mr. Flynn said he had not been trying to muzzle anyone, just suggesting councillors work together to cope with future demands. "We seem to plan for everything else, the one thing we don't plan for is child care."



### Bring a friend

Photo by STEVE UHRANEY

The Milton Y Nursery School held a special bring-a-friend day to the school last week and five-year-old Matthew Wallace brought his mom, Cathy. The youngster had a good time spending the afternoon painting and showing his mom how he spent his day.

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