

Halton wants provincial Sunday shopping referendum

7—The Canadian Champion, Friday, October 27, 1989

By BRAD REAUME

The Sunday shopping issue reared up at a Halton Region committee meeting last week. Halton, despite some lobbying, seems prepared to maintain the current standards while asking the provincial government for a referendum on the issue.

A report tabled at the administration and finance committee fuelled debate on the issue. A large number of businesses, led by a lobby of major grocery chains, have applied to the Region for the right to open on Sunday.

Control of the issue was handed to the municipalities by the Ontario government. It is feared that if one municipality allows full Sunday shopping, neighbouring municipalities will have to follow suit or lose considerable business dollars when citizens patronize the open stores.

Several criteria

Presently some businesses are allowed to open Sunday if they meet several criteria. These include convenience stores with limited floor space, shops in designated tourist areas, and restaurants.

Stores must be less than 2,400 square feet and provide items such as foodstuffs, tobacco, gasoline or special services like flowers, fresh fruit, or art and handicrafts. These stores cannot have more than three employees. Pharmacies have been given special attention, according to



Peter Pomeroy

the report, because they are allowed up to 7,500 square feet of space.

"If the province isn't prepared to assume responsibility on this issue then neither should we," said Oakville councillor John Graham. Mr. Graham first supported a referendum for Halton, but was convinced to support a motion asking the Liberal government to conduct an Ontario-wide vote.

Peter Pomeroy, Halton Regional Chairman, opposed a Region-wide referendum on the issue because it might endanger businesses in Halton like the Olde Hide House, which brings 400,000 visitors to Halton each year.

"I'm in favour of the status quo,"

Mr. Pomeroy said. "We should judge each application (to open on Sundays) individually and on its own merit."

The grocery lobby, the Committee For Fair Shopping, includes representatives of A&P, Loblaws, Miracle Mart and Food City. They met with regional officials recently to air their concerns and to suggest the municipality allow all grocery stores, regardless of size, to remain open on Sunday. Failing that, they want all stores closed.

Wayne Luedtke, executive vice-president of A&P/Dominion, said after meeting Halton officials that the

group is "frustrated by the current patchwork application of laws and the difficulty of local police to enforce them."

Major issue

Oakville Mayor Anne Mulvale said at committee that she felt Sunday shopping could become a major issue in the next provincial election. She was critical of the current approach, which she said has the Region turning a blind eye to many Sunday retailers and handing out small fines, in relation to profits.

"I don't think there's any advantage in Halton moving ahead,

(with legislation) we can wait and see what our neighbours do," Mrs. Mulvale said.

The Committee for Fair Shopping commissioned a public opinion survey which suggests that 75 per cent of Halton residents want Sunday shopping. Halton Hills councillor Rick Bonnette said he felt a public forum, which had been suggested, would be overly long, without providing any new information.

Presently only The Olde Hide House in Acton and shops along the Bronte waterfront in Oakville are open on Sundays in Halton as a result of the tourist designation.

Campbellville church seeking daycare centre

A much-needed daycare centre at St. David's Presbyterian Church was given the green light at a recent congregational meeting.

Members of Campbellville's St. David's and Nassagaweya Presbyterian churches voted to pursue the daycare facility, which would benefit both the churches and their communities.

For the last two years, a steering committee made up of members of both churches has reviewed the feasibility of the proposed centre.

Committee members revealed their findings in a presentation, which focused on the growing need for daycare in the rural area.

The group is confident the facility will become a reality, said Bruce Wilson, a member of St. David's.

"The group looks optimistically to the fall of 1990 as a reasonable target for the opening of the daycare centre," he said.

The next step for the steering committee is to have the proposal accepted by the Presbytery. If or when that occurs, the committee can apply to the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services for necessary funding.

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