

# Penman fears town's eggs will be crushed in Halton's basket

By ROB KELLY

When town administrator Roy Main argued there is strength in numbers Monday night, councillor Brian Penman countered that it is just as likely Milton will get lost in a big crowd.

A committee comprising Halton area politicians and staff has come up with the idea of banding together to not only lobby the provincial government for more money, but to draft a detailed plan on how that money will be used to fuel what is expected to be dramatic growth in the region over the next 20 years.

The committee has cobbled up the Joint Program for Infrastructure

Funding, and cites a need for \$2.64 billion over the next 20 years to finance major expansions in Oakville, as well as such megaprojects as the Lake Ontario "big pipe" servicing scheme to provide new water and thaw Milton's residential growth freeze.

Milton's general committee eventually opted to support the idea, at least at this early stage, by contributing their \$9,000 share toward moving the program forward.

Mr. Main staunchly defended the initiative, saying the province wants to shove more development planning onto the regional governments while also streamlining the provin-

cial funding grant program.

## Block funding

The new idea will mean an integrated approach to all government ministries for so-called "block funding," Mr. Main said, which will assure that roads, schools, sewage plants and houses all come onstream at about the same time, thereby lessening development frictions.

It is "imperative," Mr. Main said, that Halton's municipal governments show Queen's Park the "need for extra attention" when it comes to provincial grants.

"Our key argument is that Halton was not given the support" other regions benefitted from 20 years ago when major servicing schemes were installed that allowed massive development in such regions as Durham and Peel, Mr. Main said.

Now, with at least equal pressures expected in Halton over the next two

decades, "we want to be treated like the others."

The timing is right for the push because "we are after growth and they are after solutions," Mr. Main noted.

## Lost in shuffle?

Mr. Penman adopted a far more skeptical outlook.

"I'm really divided on this one," councillor Penman said. "The anxiety I have is that when you submit a colossal regional wish list, the first thing the province says is, 'what are your priorities?'"

Once those priorities are identified, the province will simply pare back the "wish list," councillor Penman said. "I see Milton's priorities as lost in the shuffle. Somebody has to make a decision as to what's first on the list and what's 15th."

Another problem, councillor Penman said, "is the notion that bigger is better. If it were a perfect world,

maybe bigger would be better."

He worried that throwing Milton's fortunes in with Halton would lead to "one-tier" local government, that is, effective control over all issues of consequence by Halton regional government, not local council.

## Only option

Mr. Main said he has absolute assurances from Halton's chief administrative officer, John Fleming, that the plan is not a push toward one-tier control.

The town administrator said he sees the current initiative as "the only option," beyond hodge-podge lobbying of individual government ministries for money. "What we have is an opportunity to approach the province. Those concerns sway me to support the initiative."

"The initiatives are bigger than you and then you're out," countered Mr. Penman.



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Local seniors who want to have a say in the redevelopment of Halton Centennial Manor will have their chance on Thursday, Nov. 30 between 2-4 p.m. at Hugh Foster Hall.

The regionally operated home for the aged is to be upgraded and improved to accommodate the growing number of seniors in Halton. Ideas have changed about how and where seniors want to live and what programs and services they need for support and enrichment of their lifestyle. As a result, a number of issues need to be resolved with respect to the redevelopment of the Manor.

The local focus session is an opportunity for seniors to have a say in what programs and services are made available to them. An invitation is being extended to all interested seniors in the Region to attend any of the focus group sessions being held in each Halton municipality to discuss these issues, to give their opinions of what programs and services are needed and to learn about preliminary plans for redevelopment.

Interested seniors who would like to attend should call the Social Services Department of Halton at 827-2151, ext. 305 to reserve a place and for more information.

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