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Halton to look inward

By NORMAN NELSON

Halton regional council will likely take a good long look at itself in the near future, but at least one councillor thinks it should look elsewhere.

"We're continuing to improve services and provide them at the lowest possible costs, and that's where we should be focusing our energies on," said Burlington councillor Tony Whitworth at a regional administration and finance committee meeting Wednesday.

Committee members were mulling over what to do with submissions handed in by almost all of the 24 regional councillors dealing with four aspects of regional government — how the chairman should be elected, how regional councillors should be elected, the size of council and the proportion of representation from the four Halton municipalities.

"I hope we take action other than just receiving and filing this," said Burlington Mayor Roly Bird, who initially requested the input.

Committee members backed his request, recommending council strike up a special nine-member committee to do some advance scouting on the issue.

Comprised of Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy and two councillors from each of the four Halton municipalities, the committee, if supported by full council next Wednesday, will report back with recommendations on how council can best proceed with a review of itself.

Councillor Whitworth, though, thought committee members were making a mountain out of a molehill. "I don't see this as a major issue. There's no groundswell of people saying the Region is bad — or good."

While Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale agreed that there aren't "106,000 people fomenting rebellion and revolution," she said a similar review has never been undertaken and would therefore "serve a purpose."

It's also a compromise of sorts. Earlier this year, a drive by Mr. Pomeroy to request that the province conduct a limited review of the Region was quashed in a close vote.

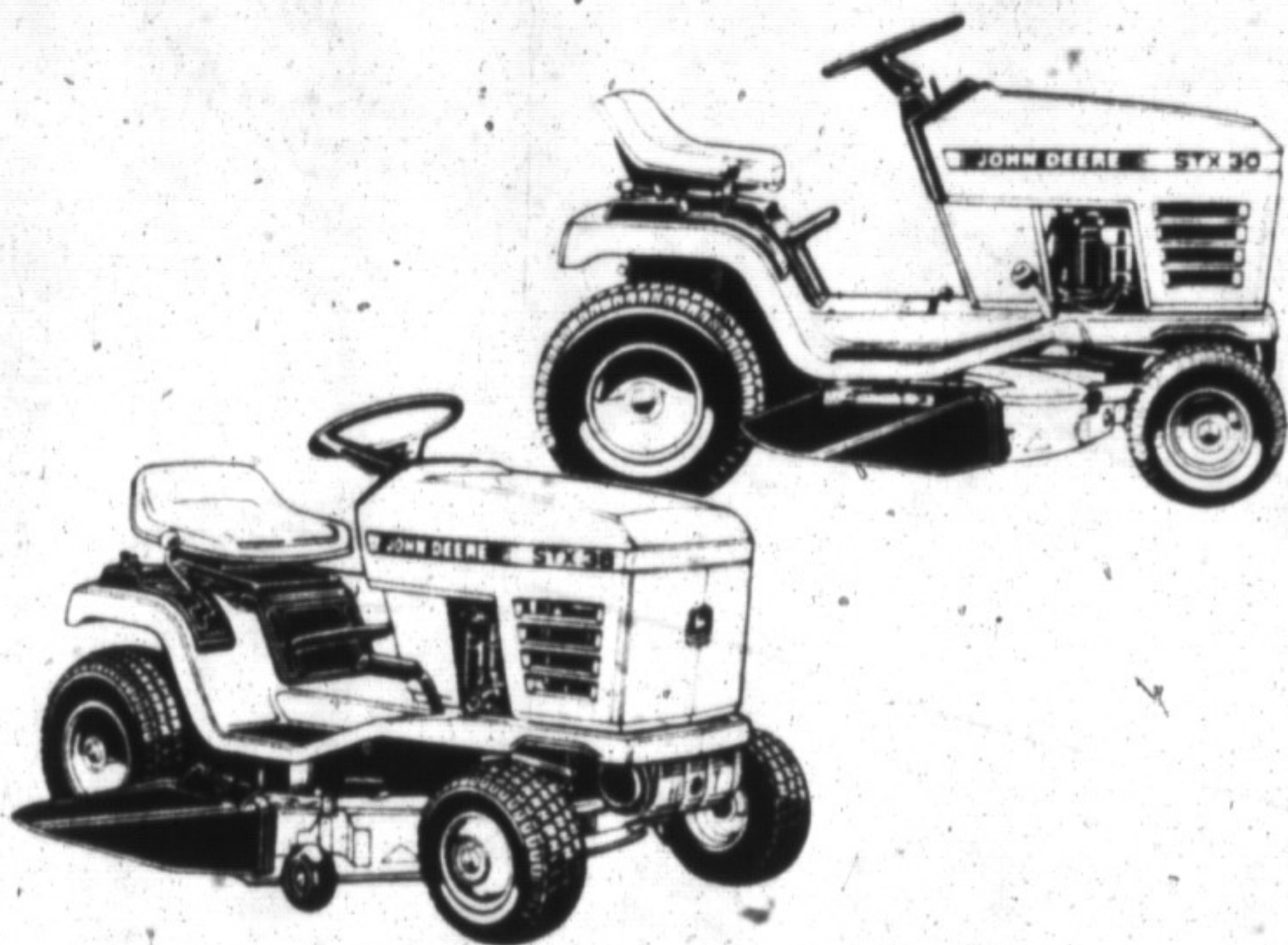
Mayor Bird hopes the submissions will lead to some aspects of regional government being changed.

For instance, he thinks the present set-up of having councillors sit at both regional and local level creates too much of a workload.

In addition to regular council and committee meetings, he said regional councillors serve on "anywhere from three to eight ad hoc committees."

Organizations which require regional representation range from the Children's Aid Society and regional police commission to the Chief Administrative Officer Performance Review Committee and the Bronte Outer Harbour Advisory Committee.

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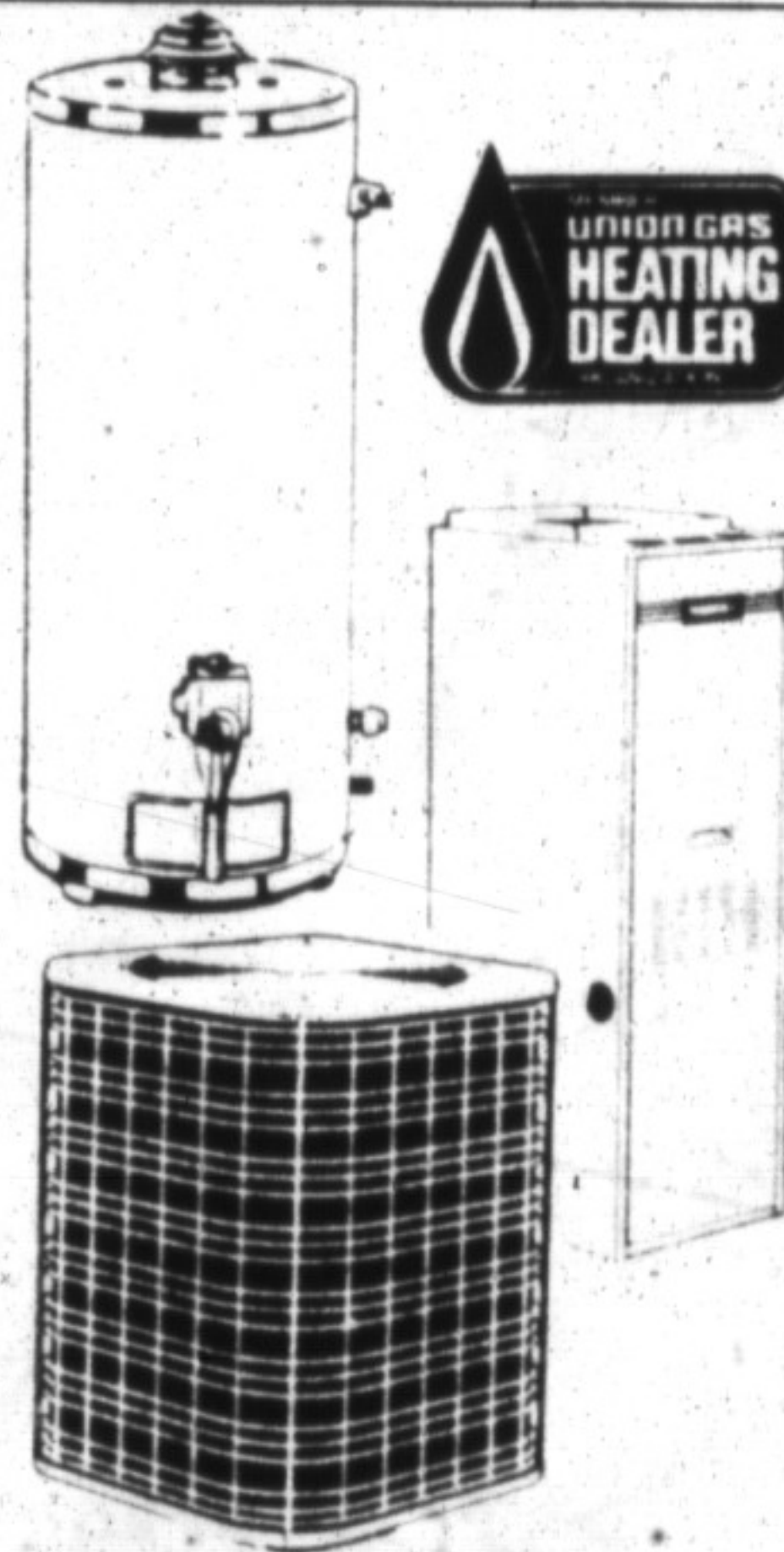
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