

# Pomeroy welcomes province's new plan to deal with garbage

By NORMAN NELSON

Halton Region Chairman Peter Pomeroy is welcoming the provincial government's new initiative in dealing with the Toronto area's mounting garbage crisis.

Calling it a "major and bold move", he added, "I think it's extremely well thought out."

Environment Minister Ruth Grier's three-pronged strategy, unveiled at Queen's Park Wednesday, calls for:

- More emphasis on implementing the so-called 3Rs by stressing reduction and reuse over recycling.

- Streamlining the expensive and time consuming environmental assessment process now required for new dumps.

- Establishing a new Greater Toronto Area (GTA) public authority — which will be a co-operative effort between provincial and municipal governments — to deal with waste management problems, and specifically to "search for and select a waste disposal site."

The latter directive apparently puts a halt to the process initiated by the previous Liberal government through the so-called Solid Waste Interim Steering Committee (SWISC).

A spokesperson in the SWISC office and a press aid of the environment minister could not confirm the ultimate fate of SWISC. Mr. Pomeroy said it's been "replaced."

Ms Grier made it known she will not stick to a promise made by the previous Liberal minister, Jim Brad-

ley, allowing Toronto area municipalities to open temporary "contingency" dumps that would not have to go through full environmental hearings.

The idea of this was to pick up the slack from 1992, when SWISC predicted the Toronto area would run out of landfill space, until 1996, which is the earliest a long-term solution could make it through the lengthy environmental hearings.

With more emphasis on 3R programs and a speeding up of the environmental hearing process, however, Ms Grier said "I am persuaded that contingency sites will not be necessary."

If additional capacity is needed on an emergency basis then her hope is to accommodate it by delaying the closing of some GTA landfills in Metro Toronto and neighbouring Peel.

Under the SWISC umbrella all five GTA municipalities (Halton, Peel, York, Metro Toronto and Durham) were required to designate contingency landfill space.

Halton, in the enviable position of being the only municipality anywhere near having a dump come onstream, didn't have to select a new site as others did, but simply offered a token 10 per cent of its future dump, slated to open in Milton in 1992.

That is now "off the table", confirmed Mr. Pomeroy.

He also praised the two other ini-

tiatives — speeding up the environmental process and beefing up 3R programs.

Commenting on the former, he said no one knows better than Halton the absurdities of the present process. The final price tag on the Milton dump, scheduled to open in 1992, could be between "\$50 million and \$100 million."

A longtime critic of the present legislation, he reiterated that "we ended up spending too much time and effort on process and documentation and too little on the environment."

Commenting on the 3Rs initiative, he said Halton is finalizing a composting pilot project in Oakville and toying with the idea of bringing in private sector expertise to help with waste management initiatives.

Any increased provincial support, he added, would be welcomed by Halton, which considers itself a leader in tackling the garbage dilemma.

There were some other other benefits to the new direction, he said. They are:

- The Province is finally becoming involved in the tough landfill siting process.

- Any landfills will be publicly run (SWISC had solicited private landfill proposals).

- The new GTA authority will be much more accountable and accessible to the public than SWISC.

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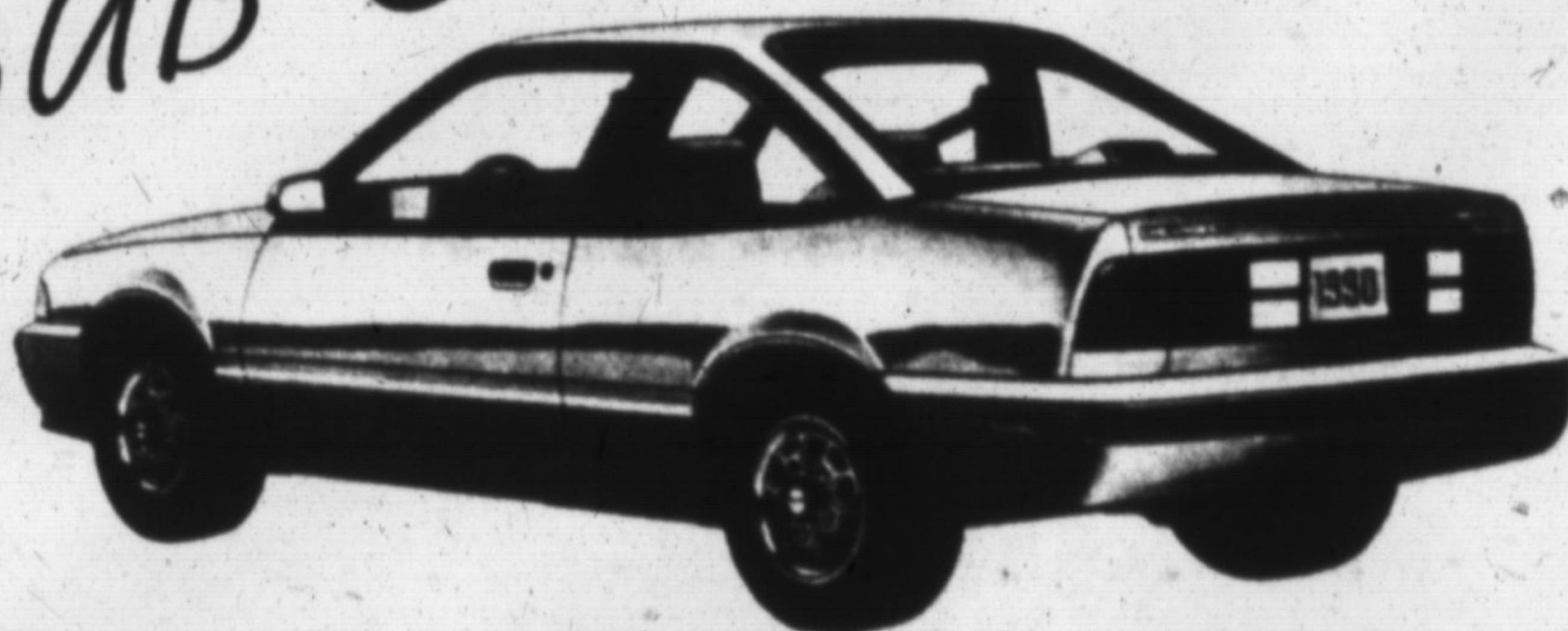
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