

# Region acts to spend \$634,000 to dispose of hazardous materials

By ROB KELLY  
News Editor

Halton regional councillors went green last week — and not only in the environmental sense. It was also the basic hue of some faces when confronted with the cost of collecting household poisons.

Members of the regional planning and public works committee approved spending \$634,000 to gather and dispose of what are known as household hazardous wastes, such as solvents, thinners, paint, batteries and pesticides.

Halton is attempting to divert such home-generated refuse from landfills. To that end, the Region funds two drop-off disposal centres (one in Burlington, one in Milton). They're open one Saturday of each month.

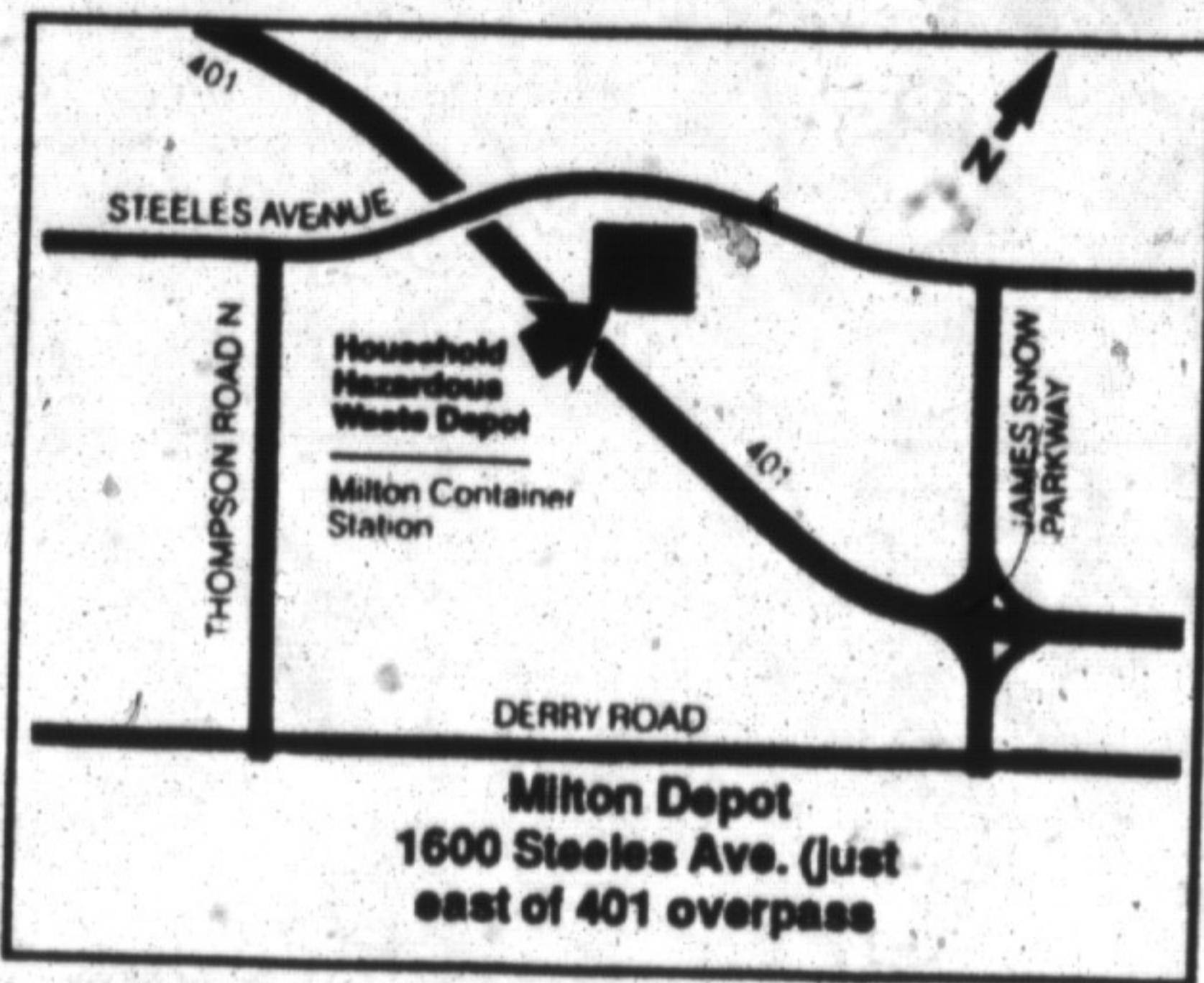
Unloading the toxins every home produces isn't cheap, even if only a small percentage of people are using the service, as is the case in Halton. The price is just less than \$5 per litre.

"It's extremely expensive, there's no doubt about that," said regional public works director Art Leitch.

Burlington councillor Bob Brechin pointed out that the total spent amounted to "two dollars per person" in Halton. While not disputing the program merits, he noted that most people aren't aware of the true financial burdens imposed by diverting such waste from landfills. "I don't think the average person realizes he is paying two dollars (in taxes) to take care of toxic waste."

Oakville councillor Fred Oliver asked what the cost would be to Halton if there was no home hazardous waste collection program.

Mr. Leitch replied that the price would be "the environmental cost of having toxic waste in the (Milton) landfill," which is slated to open later this year. It would



be "a very high environmental cost," he added.

Burlington councillor Joyce Savoline said the household hazardous waste program is part of "the price we have to pay for already half-ruining our planet. We've got to bite the bullet. It's money well spent."

Halton expects to receive roughly 145,000 litres of such waste in 1992, with 90,000 or so going to the Burlington depot and the remainder to Milton.

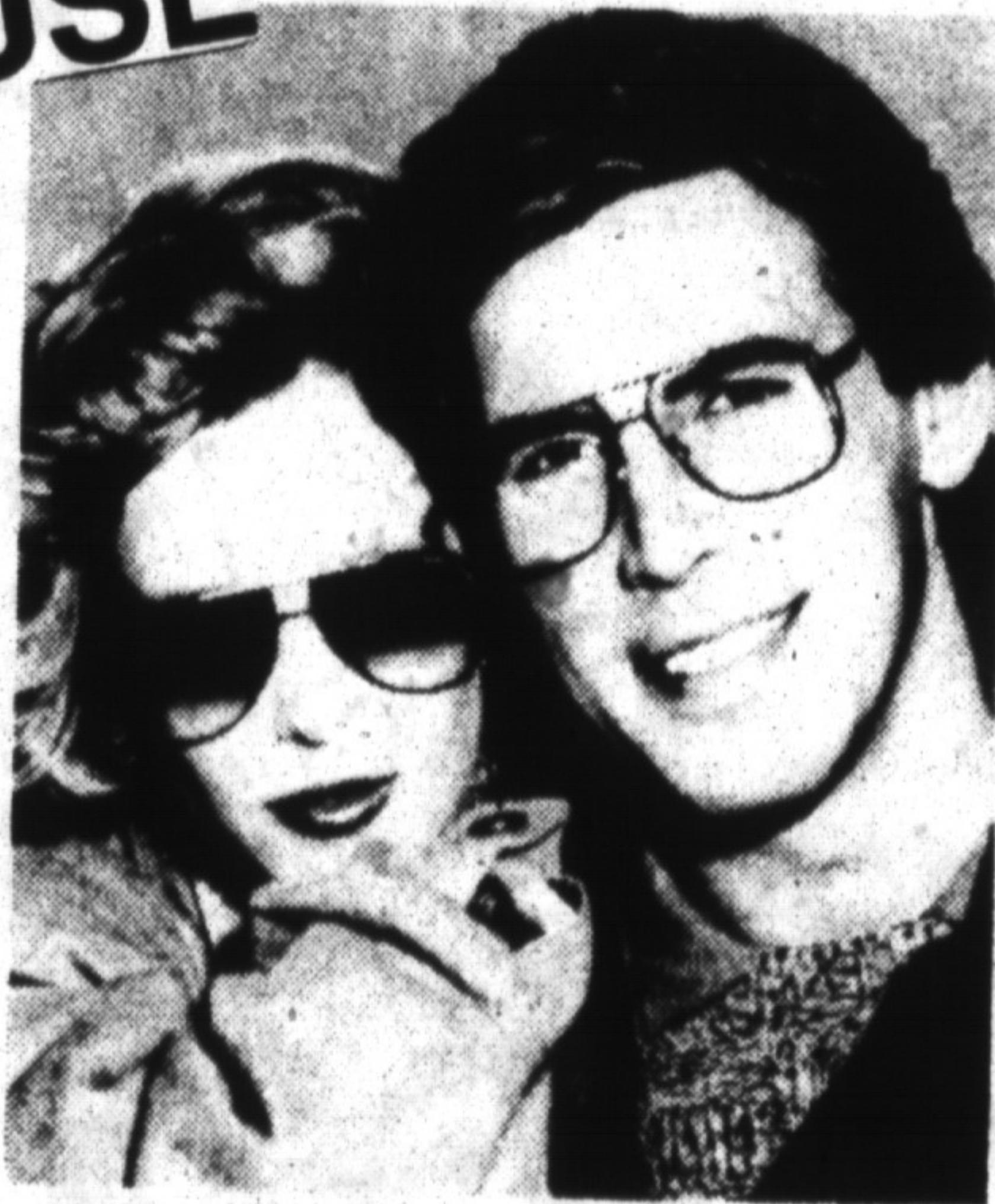
The Region retains a private firm to oversee the operation. Laidlaw Environmental Services will bill approximately \$416,000 for the Burlington centre and \$218,000 for its Milton counterpart.

For regional chairman Peter Pomeroy, the disposal rate at the two depots is disconcerting. He said Halton's estimates show that only about "eight per cent of the people are participating" in the program. "That's the frightening part about it. We're capturing a very small amount of people. We still have a long way to go as far as educating the public."

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