

Rural water pipes ticket to bankruptcy: Mulkewich

By ROB KELLY
The Champion

Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkewich warned Wednesday that Halton regional councillors who managed to ram through approval for expansion of Georgetown's water system to service one rural neighbourhood were flirting with a precedent that could, financially, drive Halton to its knees.

Mr. Mulkewich said those who favoured the proposal to extend a pipeline about two kilometres west of Georgetown have opened the floodgates for a wave of similar applications from others living near urban centres who are experiencing water difficulties. Such people will soon demand the same treatment, and councillors "who want to bankrupt the region better be ready for that debate."

As soon as the comments were out of Mr. Mulkewich's mouth, Milton Mayor Gord Krantz was on his feet to challenge them, ready to speak out of turn, obviously angered. Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy interceded and criticized Mr. Mulkewich's remark as inappropriate in an effort to begin cooling emotions that had grown more and more heated through two hours of debate.

"I was elected to make decisions and that's what we just did," said Mr. Krantz sharply, in reference to the 13-

10 vote approving the pipeline extension.

While the situation regional council faced Wednesday was by no means unique, the proposed solution to a water problem had a novel spin. The Sixth Line residents, roughly 40 homeowners, had by and large decided to pay for the pipeline themselves. At least 30 had, by Wednesday, indicated they'd take part in a scheme to fund the work with a municipal surtax levied over 10 years.

All the residents are currently on well water, but the supply appears to be rapidly dwindling and is often poor in quality. The homeowners have come up with what they see as a realistic solution — spending roughly \$235,000 to install a four-inch pipe hooking them up to Georgetown water. It would mean an extra \$7,000 or so in property taxes spread out in decade-long payments.

Regional public works officials, who don't want to see that plan materialize, say the four-inch system is inadequate and could cause costly maintenance and repair work for Halton.

Since once the thing is built it will become a regional responsibility just like any other part of the water system, no matter who paid for the installation, Halton will be committed to maintaining it, regional staff warned.

Burlington councillor Joyce Savoline said the pipeline was a bad idea. Burlington councillors have resisted

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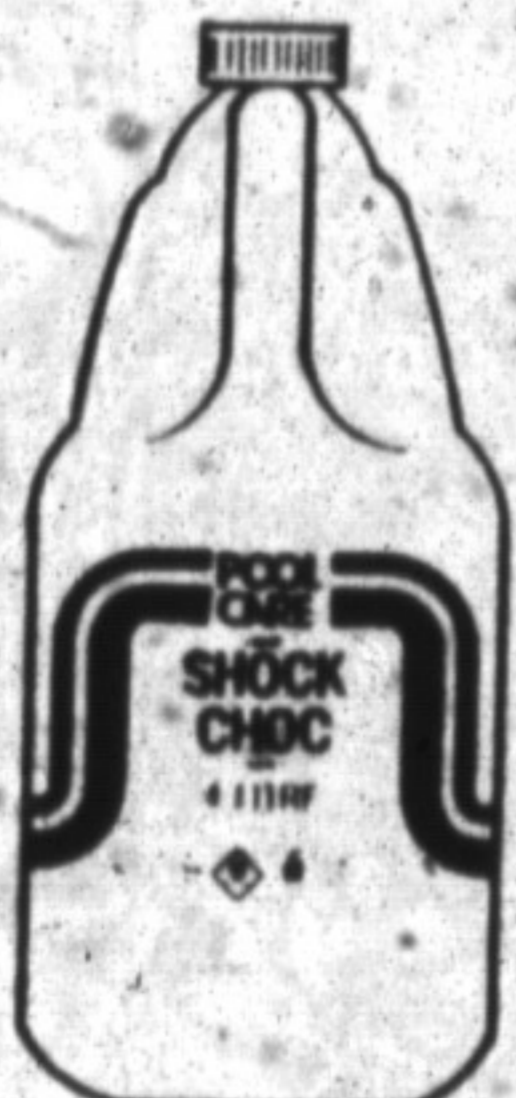
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