

Build on what we've got, consultant says of retail growth

By **ROB KELLY**
The Champion

Milton should concentrate on rejuvenating and expanding its downtown core once population growth begins again, rather than developing new shopping complexes elsewhere, according to a consultant studying retail trends.

Robin Dee, who is examining retail issues as part of the Halton Urban Structure Review (HUSR), said Monday that Milton's anticipated growth of 40,000 people in the urban core over the next 20 years won't be enough to support a large new mall. Instead, "the preferred option is to look at expansion of the existing core area." That would include the downtown and Milton Mall.

Across Ontario "we've seen enough examples" of communities that erected so-called regional malls — of 400,000 to 500,000 square feet — before such facilities were warranted by population, Mr. Dee said. The "too big, too soon" syndrome "led to some problems."

Many of those problems were with downtown cores, which were battered by competition with malls. David McCleary, Halton Region's planning policy manager, pointed out that downtown Burlington still "has not recovered from the damage" inflicted when the Burlington Mall was built in 1967.

The two men, along with Ray Simpson, another HUSR consultant, were presenting a preliminary view of Milton's retail future to perhaps 30 interested business people at Bishop Reding High School Monday night. Mr. McCleary arranged the meeting, one in a series he's conducting on HUSR progress with various community groups.

Currently about 23,500 of Milton's 35,000 people live in the urban core. When the additional 40,000 move into what is expected to be an expanded core area, they will probably demand a doubling in the size of the retail sector, Mr. Dee said.

At present there are 1 million square feet of retail space in Milton, and the new residents will require 2 million, Mr. Dee said.

Those numbers "do not suggest that you will reach the threshold where you will be requiring a major

Donations sought for victims of family violence

Halton Women's Place is collecting donations of non-perishable food and toys to help make Christmas better for past and present residents of the shelter.

Valerie and Steve Wagg of Milton are organizing the drive for battered women and their children who left their abusive homes, in most cases, with nothing.

Donated items will be used to make up Christmas gift baskets for the women and their children now living on their own across Halton Region. About 50 families, including 90 children, will receive the good will.

Non-perishable food, clothing, and toys are needed, said Mrs. Wagg, a volunteer who puts together the gift baskets annually. Her husband, a Toronto firefighter, will deliver the baskets using a van donated by Discount Car and Truck Rentals.

Donations can be dropped off at the couple's home at 665 Woodward Ave. or call 876-1378 for pick up.

regional shopping centre," Mr. Dee said. Normally, a mall like that would only be built when the population touches 90,000 to 100,000.

Mr. Simpson warned that those mapping Milton's retail future "have to get our homework done so we can defend this" type of plan against

those who would build a large mall where they please, in hopes of luring shoppers from elsewhere. Many commercial developers follow that procedure and end up battling municipal officials at so-called "store wars" provincial hearings, Mr. Simpson pointed out.

Mr. Simpson said that "realist-

ically" Milton should expect population growth again in five years, in no small measure because "we have dillyed, dallied and studied so long we are going to have a problem, and we are going to be forced to do something about it."

There are presently 4.2 million people in the Greater Toronto Area,

which includes Halton, and 100,000 more on average are moving in yearly, the planners pointed out Monday. Halton, more particularly Milton, will be targeted for substantial growth in the next two decades.

The HUSR study is a \$4 million initiative geared toward coping with that growth.



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