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## Even coffee money is trimmed as Halton pares its expenses

By BRAD REAUME  
The Champion

Halton Region is getting more efficient, right down to the coffee served at committee meetings, a report to the regional administration and finance committee tabled last week indicates.

Revisions to policy surrounding councillors' expenses are expected to make more dollars available to those who need them, while not costing the Region more money.

Conference and memento budgets were cut deeply last year during social contract cuts. Conference

money has been pared from \$60,000 to \$10,000 and mementos were halved from \$200 to \$100 per councillor. In addition, the mileage account was dropped 33 per cent and the official functions budget dropped 25 per cent.

But several councillors recently expressed the need for materials and services to support the role of regional councillor. With these things in mind, the thrust this year has been to better allocate available funds.

Considering these concerns, a policy has been adopted that increased flexibility and individual discretion while not increasing the

money available.

Conference and memento budgets are now pooled. Councillors not using their funds will have them made available to those who need them for conferences and the like, the administration and finance committee decided last week.

"We shrank the budgets for these items last year," said councillor Bob Brechin explaining the subcommittee's thinking. "We are being extremely frugal."

Halton sends delegates to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Association of Ontario Municipalities (AMO) conferences. In 1992 three delegates attended FCM in Montreal, at a cost of \$3,900. In 1993 the conference in Edmonton cost Halton \$8,590. Five councillors attended. The AMO conferences have cost Halton \$1,300 in 1992 and \$3,200 in 1993.

"What this effectively does is limit the number of conferences and seminars," said Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkeewich at the administration and finance committee meeting.

At Wednesday's council meeting Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn suggested costs associated with having Halton members on the AMO or FCM executive should be picked up by those organizations, rather than letting the region cover them.

There was disagreement. "It is cheaper to cover our own costs rather than pay for all executive members costs as part of the organization," said Oakville councillor Liz Behrens.

Oakville Mayor Anne Mulvale agreed with Mr. Flynn. "If the whole organization benefits, then the whole organization should pay."

"Mr. Flynn is right," said Oakville councillor Keith Bird. "Staff for those organizations are paid for by the whole. The executive should be as well. The system now excludes many people from smaller communities from being on the executive because they can't afford it."

"Certainly the executive costs divided by 940 members of AMO are less than what we're paying now," said Mr. Flynn.

"This should be debated at AMO," said regional chairman Peter Pomeroy. "We won't accomplish anything here."

In addition, new arrangements have been made for coffee and juice at meetings that should reduce the cost by about 33 per cent, or \$1,500 per year.

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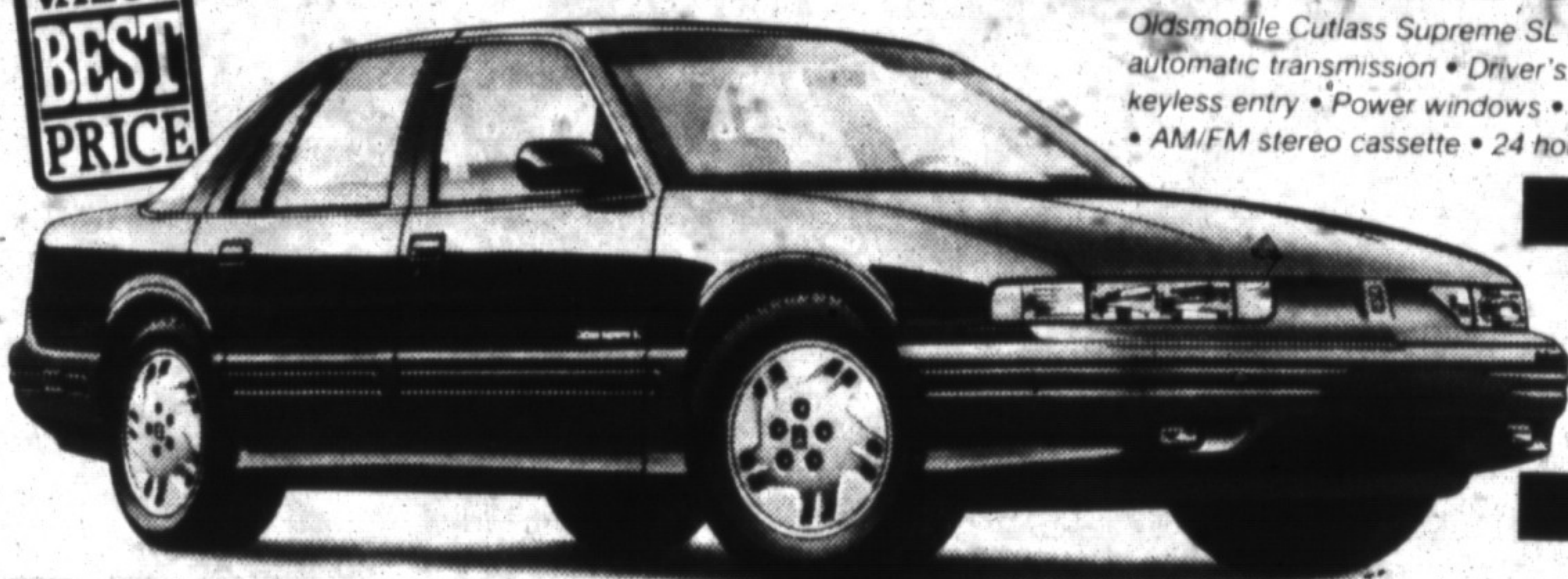
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