

# Cool municipal reception for planning reforms

By ANGELA BLACKBURN  
The Champion

Town officials say Planning Act reforms won't give municipalities greater control over development, as promised by the province.

"Bill 163 goes no further in streamlining the planning process than the current legislation," said town planning director Mel Iovio in a report on reforms last week.

Planning staff will voice concerns

at a legislative hearing later this month.

The provincial government says Bill 163 will hasten the planning process and protect the environment. Mr. Iovio said the reforms clarify development process timing and social, cultural, environmental and economic issues. But the bill doesn't go far enough in wresting planning authority from the province.

Senior town planner Bill Mann told council, "The provincial government

has said Bill 163 will give municipalities greater control over the development process. In our analysis of the Planning Act we find that just isn't so."

Halton North MPP Noel Duignan says changes will reform a system "backlogged, full of needless disputes and (which) didn't adequately protect the environment.

"This legislation fits into our government's plan of job creation and protecting the environment, as jobs will be created by speeding up development decisions, and the environment will be given additional protection through the policy statements," said Mr. Duignan.

## Worried about wording

Town planning staff don't like a wording change from "have regard to" to "shall be consistent with" provincial policies.

"It's our concern that the flexibility and discretion in the current Planning Act is essentially eliminated," said Mr. Mann.

Local planning decisions and proposed mandatory municipal Official Plans will have to conform to new provincial policies on heritage and ecosystems, community development and infrastructure, housing, agricultural land, energy and water conservation.

Mr. Iovio said the policy statements are already approved.

The proposed reforms, are open for debate, and were introduced at Queen's Park in May after three years' work by a planning reform commission headed by former Toronto Mayor John Sewell.

Currently the province has primary planning authority. Reforms are supposed to allow municipalities to make development decisions while the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hears disputes. Minor disputes won't go to the OMB, but will be solved at council.

## Bone of contention

A bone of contention is retention of a provincial power to declare a planning issue "a provincial interest", taking it outside municipal control. The grounds for such a declaration are expanded, to include clauses like "adequate provision of sewage and water services and waste management systems" and "the appropriate location of growth and development."

"(That) broad definition could be used to declare almost any planning matter an issue of provincial interest," said Mr. Iovio.

The door is open to further expansion too, something Mr. Iovio said "is increasing ministerial intrusive powers."

Other reforms include shortening time limits on decision-making and the holding of public meetings on Official Plan amendments, zoning bylaws, and subdivision plans. Failure to meet deadlines steers the application to the OMB.

Mr. Iovio reported "it suggests certain developers may plan their process strategy so it's geared to circumvent local and regional opinion, and be aimed at the OMB."

Halton Region's planning commis-

sioner, Rash Mohammed, is vice-chair of the Regional Planning Commissioners' Association of Ontario which is working with the government on the reforms and has provided detailed comment.

"It's my reading of the act that it's significantly loaded to provincial policy," said Mr. Mohammed, adding, "I know Halton. I don't believe anybody at Queen's Park is as familiar with Halton Region as Rash Mohammed is."

The regional planner said his concerns include the rush to approve the bill before governing regulations are written. "There's an old saying, haste makes waste," he noted.

## Use as a model

Mr. Mohammed said he's pleased about certain things, including the fact that reforms will use the Halton Urban Structure Plan as a model for integration of the Planning Act and Environmental Assessment Act, as well as the region's Official Plan. Another area in which Halton is six years ahead of the province is in dispute mediation measures, which are part of the reforms.

"I am pleased about that. I am concerned though about it not going far enough to give more decision making to our elected people," he said.

Nor, in the planner's view, are all processes going to be faster. Some will be, others, involving approval referrals, for example from the town to region, will become more cumbersome, he predicted.



## Milton Historical Society Heritage Home Award

The Milton Historical Society is presenting a Heritage Home Award to someone who has preserved and maintained their home, thereby making a valuable contribution to the visual and historic character of the Town of Milton.

These homes must be at least 75 years old and will be judged on the exterior only.

Nomination ballots may be submitted on your own behalf or others and are requested by Sept. 27, 1994. The award will be presented Oct. 20, 1994 at the regular meeting of the Historical Society at Hugh Foster Hall.

### BALLOT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ nominate the owners of \_\_\_\_\_ for the Milton Historical Society Heritage Home Award.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Send or deliver to Marjorie Powys, 121 Mill St., Milton Ont. L9T 1R8 (corner of Mill and James) by Sept. 27, 1994.

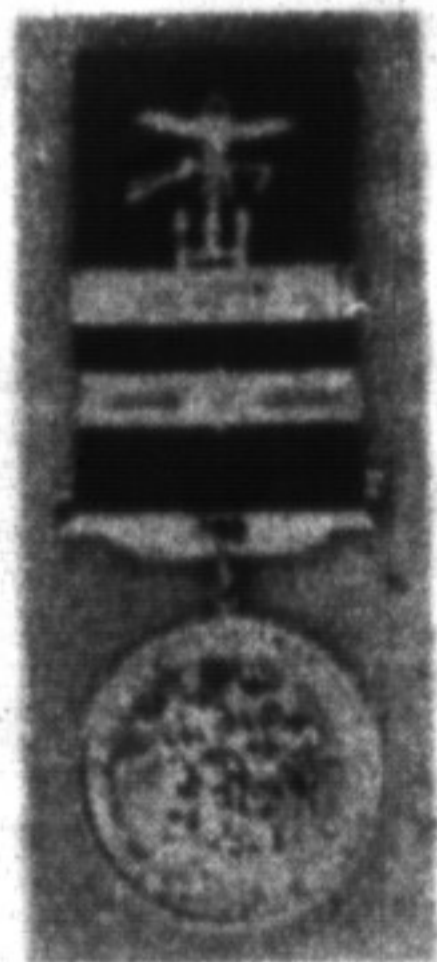
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Please contact **GEORGE THORNBORROW** at the Milton Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion to pick up the necessary forms.

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## For bright kids

# Fall workshops planned

What do predatory garden bugs and virtual reality have in common?

They are both going to be explored thoroughly by curious young people at the first workshops being offered by the Association for Bright Children tomorrow (Sept. 10).

The season's lineup of intriguing workshops, geared to students age 7 to 16 includes such topics as Bones, Cuts and Stitches, Amazing Popsicle Bridges, Computer Insides, Model Planes and Engines, Unseen Worlds in Microscopes, Lasers in Action, Astronomy and Meteor Craters and Vet for a Day. The majority of the 72 workshops offered will be held on Saturday afternoons at a cost of \$5 to \$10.

Workshops are led by local teachers, college and university professors, graduate students, engineers and other professionals who volunteer their time and expertise. These

sessions provide inquisitive youngsters the opportunity to pursue a subject of interest or explore a whole new area.

For example, for those who enjoy chemistry, University of Guelph professor Dr. Adrian Schwan will delight and amaze participants with hands-on experiments and colorful demonstrations in his Chemistry Circus Polymer Properties workshop, scheduled for Sept. 17 between 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at T.A. Blakelock High School in Oakville.

The Association for Bright Children is a non-profit provincial organization with more than 35 chapters. It has been in operation since 1983 and is the recognized voice for bright and gifted students in the province. Copies of complete workshop listings are available at any of the public libraries in Halton or by calling 827-3065 or 847-9440.

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Brian Goodwin

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