

Halton may not replace communications officer

By Denis Gibbons
Special to The Champion

With its communication officer leaving to take up a new post in Peel

Region, the Halton Board of Education will likely decide this month if, in the face of rising costs, the position is really necessary.

Brian Woodland, who has held the

job since December of 1988, is leaving to become the new manager of communications for the Peel Board of Education. His appointment is effective September 20.

The Halton job pays somewhere between \$51,824 and \$64,780, and while that's only a drop in the bucket from a \$270-million budget, eliminating the position might win

trustees some favour with ratepayers in an election year.

Bob Williams, director of education for the Halton board, said Mr. Woodland was hired by Peel board only three weeks ago. He said an acting communications officer for Halton has not been named.

"We don't replace anyone automatically," said Mr. Williams. "Officially it's my decision, but in today's world I wouldn't make such a decision without consulting the board."

Chair Dave Whiting said the position has not been removed by the board and he expects it will be retained, since it was included in a report made by the communications policy committee, a group made up of trustees and ratepayers.

"It would be a bit of slap in the face to them to remove the position," he said, "To try to change that would have to be a board decision."

However, Frank Gue, former chair of the Taxpayers Coalition Halton, believes the board might be wise not to replace Mr. Woodland.

Mr. Gue said the salary range is really much higher than what board officials describe when other costs are figured in. He was referring to the rather large benefits package that goes with the job and the office space, secretarial services and general office services required.

"And let no one at the board offices say these services would be needed anyway."

He said the cost of interacting with other staff members must also be calculated. "Presumably this officer sits down once a month with someone highly placed and highly priced."

Mr. Gue said Mr. Woodland was an earnest and hard worker.

"But his position is to some extent being an apologist for the administration. If they do decide to maintain the position, the coalition would strongly recommend that the job be tied much more closely to the board than the administration."

During his term of service in Halton, Mr. Woodland was named best school board public relations person on the Toronto Sun education honor roll. He was also instrumental in bringing the annual conference of the National School Public Relations Association to Toronto, the first time it had been held outside the United States.

Mr. Williams said he wishes him well in his new job.

In his new job in Peel, Mr. Woodland will be responsible for directing internal and external communications for the Peel board, one of the largest public school boards in Canada. He will also be responsible for media relations and communications management.

Lee unhappy

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pay system has indeed worked. It has eliminated a taxpayer subsidy of the system," said Mr. Leitch.

"There have been some concerns," he admitted, adding, "The proposed modification in fee structure should go a long way toward addressing those."

Regional treasurer Joe Rinaldo said the use of credit cards to pay fees will also be accepted and a \$50,000 road project to directly link the main access road to the container station should address the fact that the dump site's interior roadways weren't originally designed to accommodate fee collection.

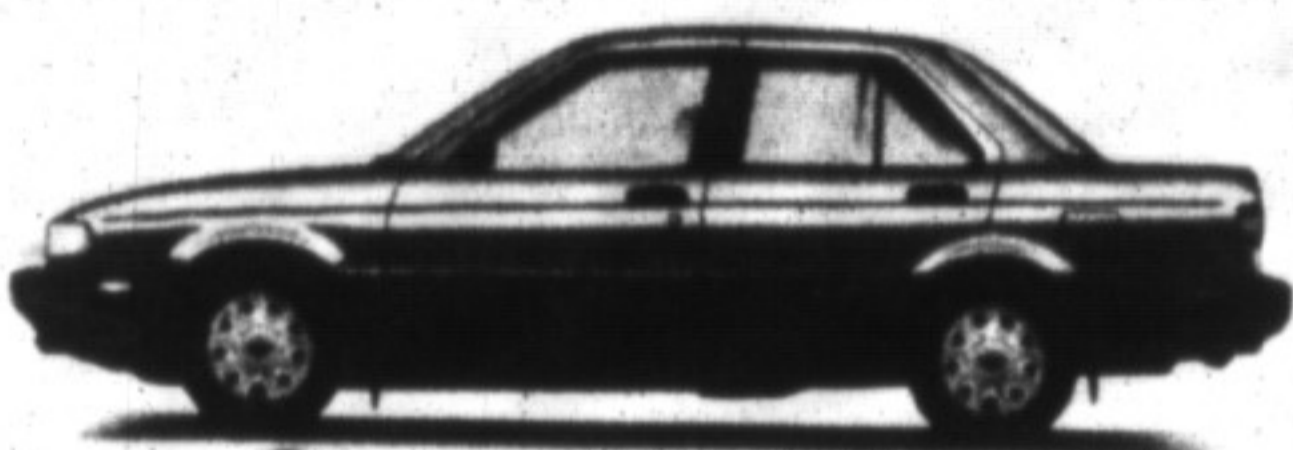
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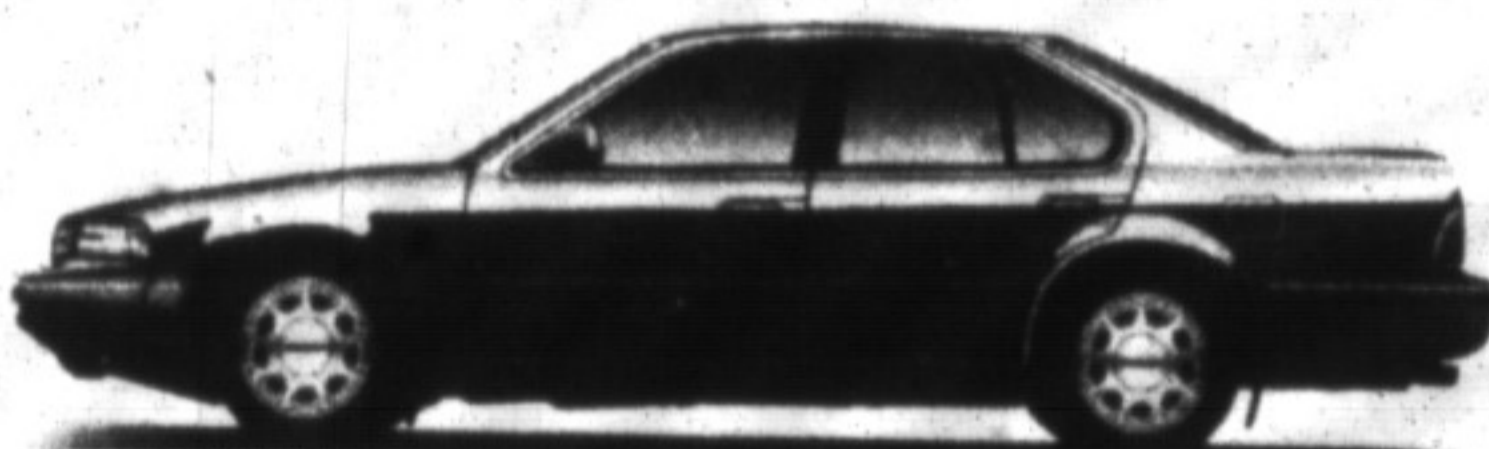
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