

Milton to formulate paper on GTA, Halton reform

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

Town council will consider the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) task force report and consultant Harry Kitchen's report on restructuring Halton regional council at the same time.

Recently council decided Milton should put forward a position on the GTA report with some speed, as the provincial government has indicated it will make its policy decisions within 90 days.

Milton's Chief Administrative Officer David Hipgrave said the local submission to the province should address the GTA report within the confines of Milton's original paper, delivered to the GTA task force when it was still deliberating. Milton's text was called "Bigger is not Better, Smaller is Smarter".

Anne Golden's report on reforming the GTA calls for a new super-council of 30 members to represent 4.5 million people, including all the suburbs. Regional government would be scrapped under that scenario.

"The recommendations of the task force are wide and far reaching, especially for smaller towns like Milton," said Mr. Hipgrave. "The province is very interested in input."

Mayor Gord Krantz was quick to point out that the local submission to the province should be driven by the political arm of Milton government, not the bureaucracy.

Mr. Krantz called for councillors to seek input from a wide variety of sources and bring that to the discussion. On less sensitive issues, council uses a staff report as the basis for their discussion.

"We have to take the leadership on this," said Mayor Krantz.

Mr. Hipgrave agreed, saying the GTA report focussed on three areas: economic development, tax reform and government

structure. He added that Milton's views on municipal consolidations will carry particular weight, considering the GTA report suggests Milton consolidate some of its political influence with Halton Hills and Caledon.

"I looked at the background of those members of the task force," said councillor Rick Day. "So many Ph.D.s and professors. How can these people think that bigger is better? A super city will be more expensive."

Mr. Day said he only liked one line of the report, which suggested school boards be amalgamated with local councils. Given the accountability to the taxpayer that such a plan would provide, Mr. Day said he would support such an initiative.

Councillor Colin Best suggested the committee which drafts the report include all members of council

because of the importance of the issue.

"We should consider where other centres stand," said Mr. Best. "Media reports suggest Burlington is split on pulling out (of the GTA), Halton Hills is not too enthusiastic either. I understand within the report there is a suggestion that those municipalities on the edge could go either way."

Mr. Best was also concerned about suggestions in the GTA report that local municipalities pick up the administration of Homes for the Aged. Having the responsibility for Allendale could put quite a strain on Milton's finances and staff, he said.

Councillor John Challinor suggested Mr. Kitchen's recent report for restructuring regional council be commented on at the same. Councillors agreed with little discussion.



David Hipgrave

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