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**Mulkewich:**

**Kids are being treated 'like widgets' in report**

By **BRAD REAUME**  
*The Champion*

Ontario children are being treated like widgets, says Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkewich.

He made the comments after reading a review of Ontario's child care written by Halton's commissioner of social services, Bonnie Ewart.

"The report leaves the impression that children are widgets," said Mayor Mulkewich. "The tenor of the report infuriated me. We are not dealing with widgets, we're dealing with our future and the people of our future."

Ms Ewart told members of the health and social services committee that the report was a quick overview of the potential impacts of provincial initiatives in the child care area.

She explained that it intentionally lacked detail because specific provincial plans have not been announced.

The report details potential changes to child care in areas of licensing, funding, and standards. The province is suggesting that the municipal role in funding child care spaces and the licensing of facilities be reviewed as part of the Who Does What panel work on municipal reform, chaired by David Crombie.

Changes to licensing being proposed include shifting the staff to child ratio to allow more children for each staff mem-



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**WALTER MULKEWICH**

ber. All aspects of funding are being reviewed.

Mr. Mulkewich wanted more detail on the treatment of private and non-profit child care providers.

He complained that provincial policies might reduce the pay of staff members in an industry that is already notoriously low paying.

According to Ms Ewart more details will come from the province when decisions are made. Until that time it is difficult to assess impacts.

"This is just preliminary information," said Halton Chair Joyce Savoline. "To suggest the report treats children like widgets leaves a strong impression. We are on this and we're dealing with it."

Mr. Mulkewich disagreed, reiterated his comments and said it was important to put his statements on the table prior to the full report being released.

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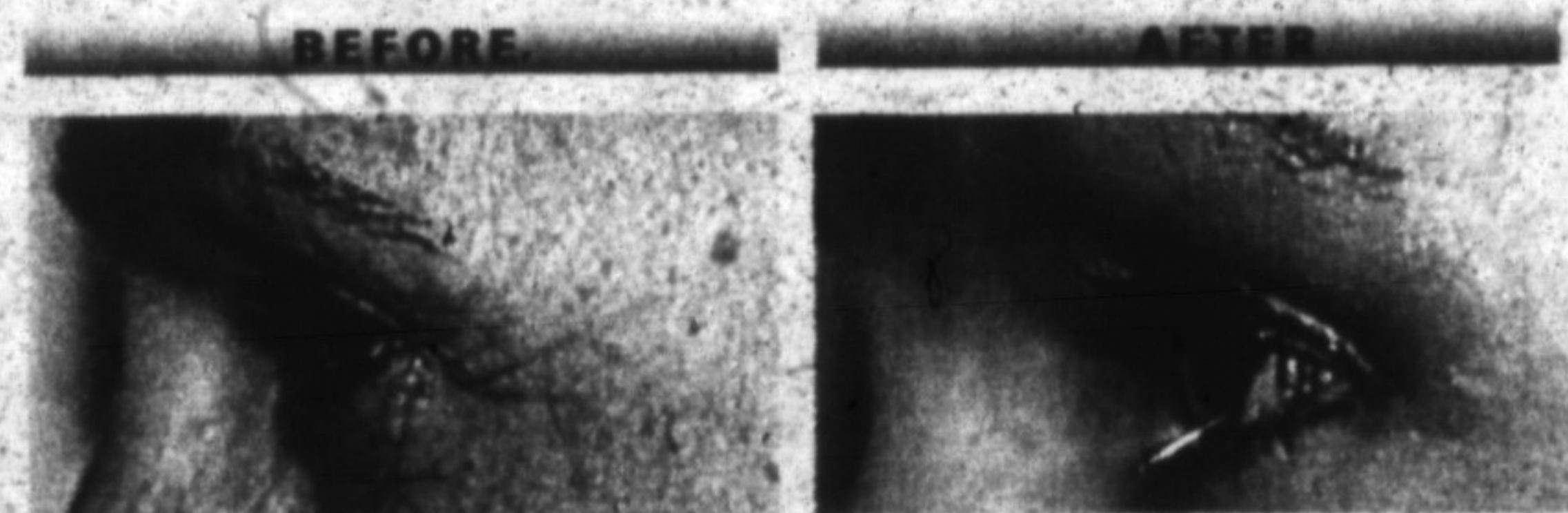
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