

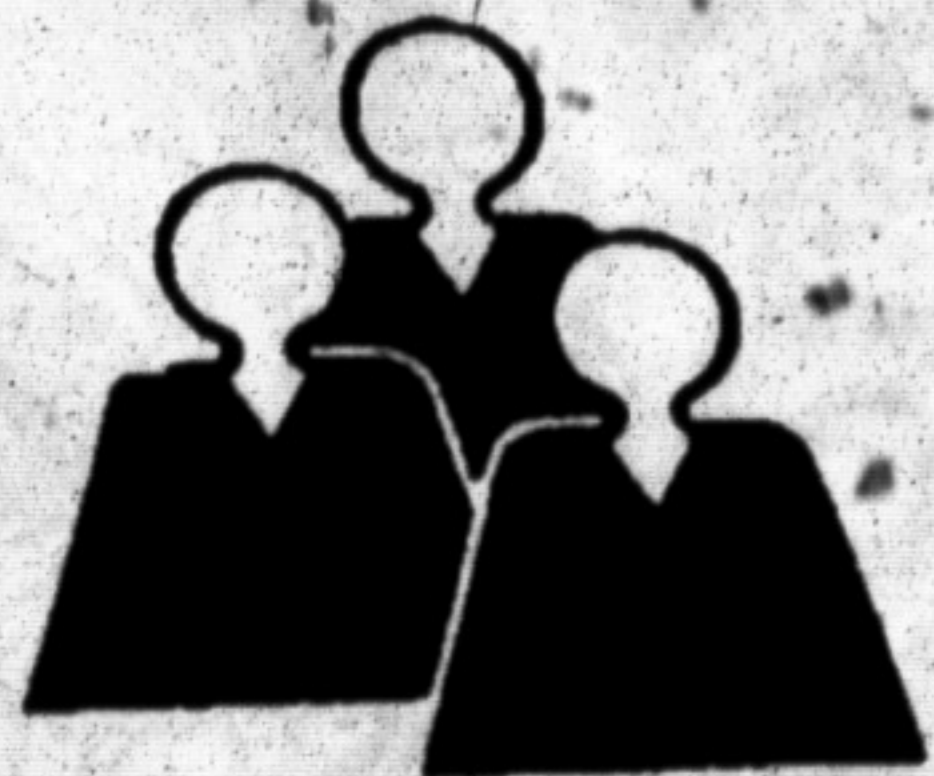
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Halton moves to crunch numbers

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

Regional officials will take their first stab today (Wednesday) at potential financial impacts of massive changes the province has announced for municipal government.

Regional Chair Joyce Savoline warned the numbers will only be preliminary and are based upon a number of assumptions. She



Joyce Savoline

noted that numbers issued by other municipalities in the immediate aftermath of the announcements were based upon so many assumptions as to be largely meaningless.

"Remember, it has been hard to get a details from the provincial government," Ms Savoline said. "We did not want to issue numbers without some background work because we are afraid that the public will remember only the first numbers we issue. And they will change."

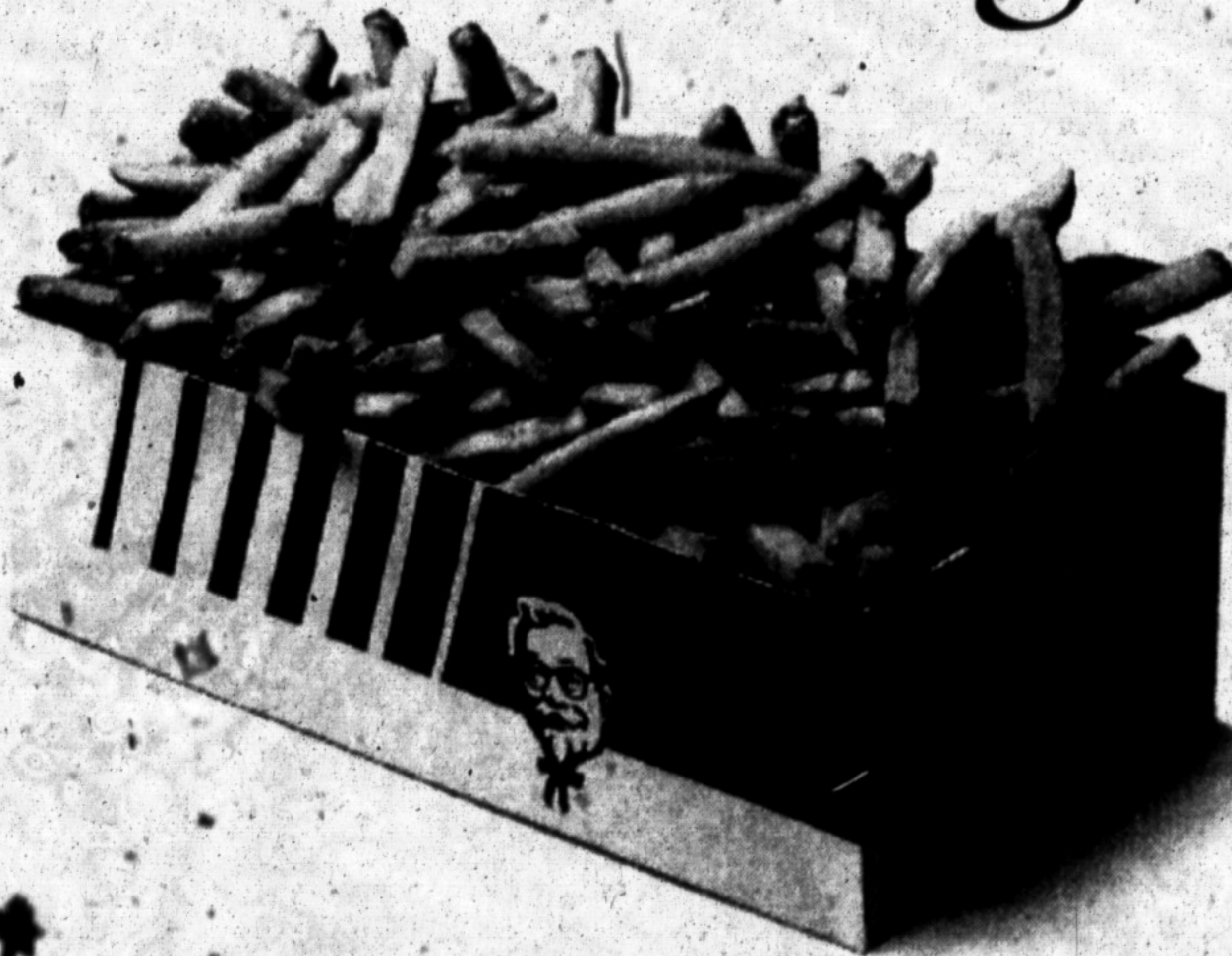
In fact, according to regional officials, the province said they will not have their own, more detailed financial impacts available for at least a month, perhaps two.

"Ever since the announcements I've received criticism that no numbers have been available," said Burlington Councillor Bob Brechin. "The numbers are based on so many assumptions that any numbers we provided would be wrong. I don't want us to go off in all sorts of directions like Chicken Little saying 'the sky is falling, the sky is falling.'"

"The program changes and their financial impacts should have been announced together," said Oakville Councillor Kevin Flynn. Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale said the previous NDP government's announcement of the social contract did not arrive with all relevant information, either.

Burlington Mayor Walter Mulkeiwich said he fully expected portions of the information would not be available for a year, as some of the programs will be phased in beginning January 1, 1998.

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