

Region has no jurisdiction over airport's fill operations

By Julia Le
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Halton Region has no jurisdiction over the Burlington Executive Airport's fill operations, according to a report.

Discussed at the Region's planning and public works meeting last week, the staff report states fill operations are the local municipality's responsibility and the environmental impacts lie with the Ministry of Environment. The findings of the report didn't come as much of a surprise to councillors, who over the last month have been involved in a number of discussions at the regional level about the airport's activities after a newly-formed local citizens' group complained about fill operations. Rural Burlington Greenbelt Coalition members have spoken before both a regional committee and council, asking the Region to intervene in any way it can.

Burlington Councillor John Taylor said at last week's meeting the City of Burlington accepts its responsibility, having hired a lawyer to help find solutions around the airport dispute over fill activity.

But what's of more concern to him and a number of other committee members is the broader issue — the airport's plan for expansion. Taylor said he fears the airport will become "Buttonville west," referring to owner Vince Rossi's plans to accommodate the closing Buttonville Airport's westerly traffic. He said Rossi plans to widen and extend runways and make way for corporate jets and helicopters.

"He's talking about 30 to 40 more hangers on property, he's talking about a 60,000-sq-ft.

repair building for aircrafts and he's talking about a terminal," said Taylor. "Those locations of those buildings are different from the plan he provided to (City of Burlington) staff as of yesterday."

Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr said the economic benefits to expand the airport just aren't there when you look at the regional development strategy.

He said the strategy was done in consultation with the public, and not one person listed an expansion of the airport as part of the region's economic success.

Meanwhile, Milton Councillor Colin Best said an expansion of the airport — located at the border of Milton and Burlington at Bell School Line and Britannia Road — could have a positive effect on Halton.

He argued helicopters and jets have been landing at the airport for more than a decade.

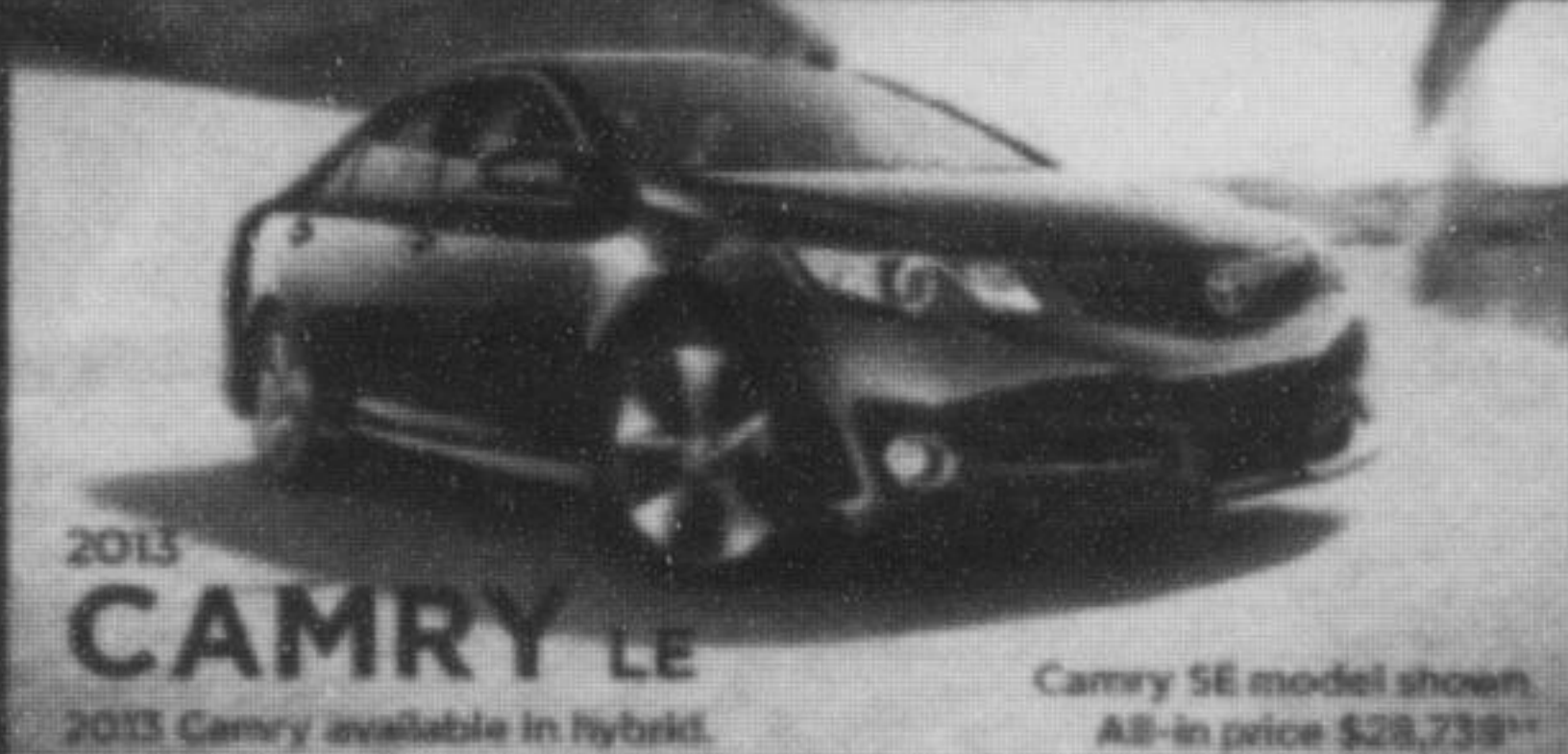
"If done properly, it could be a benefit," he said, adding that the airport already has more traffic than the St. Catharines and Kitchener airports.

Burlington Mayor Rick Goldring asked Regional staff what it would do in anticipation of significant development at the airport.

Mark Meneray, the Region's commissioner of legislative and planning services, said the Region would apply the "policies of the official plan to any expansion of the airport as it would with other applicants." As the airport is on agricultural lands, it doesn't qualify for servicing from the Region, he said.

Julia Le can be reached at jle@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @JuliaMilton-News.

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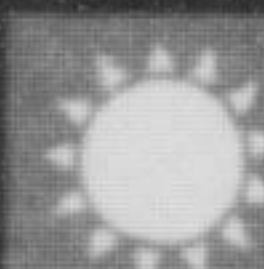


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