

# EMIL

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Kolb, Emil

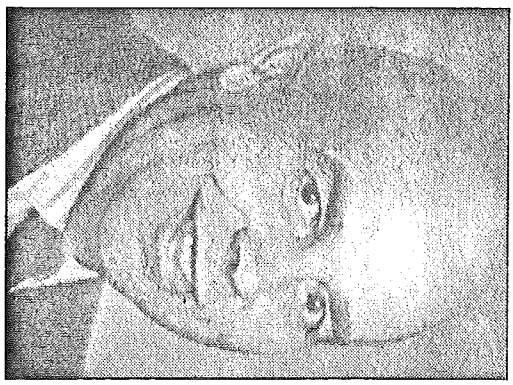
## Honest effort has earned Caledon's Emil Kolb Peel Region's top job

By JOHN STEWART  
Staff Reporter

It is popular these days to revile the contemporary image of the politician: the smooth-talking word-smith with an agenda vacillating with every change in public opinion polls and a calculated physical presence that smacks of product marketing.

And then, there's Emil Kolb. The man Peel Region councillors chose in December to lead them for the next three years is a throwback to old-fashioned values in politics. He's a straight talker and a hard worker who believes that just about any problem can be solved with some honest discussion and a lot of elbow grease.

In an interview in his new office at Peel headquarters in Brampton, it soon becomes clear that Kolb



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doesn't have an ostentatious bone in his body. A staple of politics in Caledon since he was talked into coming onto council in the mid-1960s, Kolb is a completely unknown quantity to the average Mississaugan.

Asked how he'd describe himself to the urban dwellers in southern Peel, Kolb isn't quite sure what to say. "Some people are very good at boasting about themselves," says Kolb, who was born in the depression-era sandstorms of rural Saskatchewan in 1936. It is painfully obvious that he the former Caledon mayor doesn't count himself among that group. "Work is something that never bothered me," he says, immediately shifting the focus away from himself. "The hours I have to work are not an issue with me."

### Up at dawn

In fact, Kolb still gets up at the crack of dawn most days to do a few chores on the almost 1,000 acres of dairy farmland which he, his brother and son own on the Eighth Line in Albion. "I like doing that," says the father of four and the grandfather of four. "Some people play tennis or exercise but I like to do chores."

A regional councillor since Peel was formed in 1973, Kolb admits that he was "not all that impressed" after his first council session. "I wondered 'why did I get myself into this?'" he recalls. But he stuck it out and realized "for regional government to be successful, it's up to all of us to really make it work."

Although it delivers critical services such as health care, water and sanitary sewers to its 720,000 residents, the Region is a largely invisible level of government to its citizens, a fact Kolb doesn't think will ever change. And that's probably as it should be, he says, since he feels local municipal councils should be on the front-line of deci-

sion-making.

One of Kolb's goals, like his predecessors before him, is to create an Official Plan for the Region. The fact Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have been unable to agree on an overall blueprint for development is a continuing source of embarrassment. Kolb hopes to take a new approach, working more closely with the three area mayors to try to get consensus.

As a resident of Caledon "which provides so much open space" for the remainder of Peel, Kolb is quite aware that he brings a different perspective to the chair. But he's quick to point out it isn't a parochial one. He was one of the biggest supporters of Peel contributing directly to the capital costs of the Mississauga waterfront plan, although not too many Caledon residents will go windsurfing at Lakefront Promenade Park.

### A great job

Peel may be a strange creature — combining the suburban future and the agrarian past — but it has worked surprisingly well according to Kolb. "When I drive down Highway 10 and see all that development, I think what a great job Mississauga has done," he says. Caledon will always have a special place in his heart, but "I'm going to do what's in the best interests of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon."

Ironically, Kolb got the least support in his bid for chairman from his hometown council. Kolb and most of council were swept out of office in a tax backlash Nov. 12.

Being involuntarily retired as mayor after six years might make some people bitter. But Kolb doesn't seem to be built like that. He took the man who beat him, Norm Calder, on a tour of the municipality and introduced him to many key figures. Of course, Kolb was hoping Calder would support him for Peel chairman. Calder announced he would support Kolb, then changed his mind. The new chairman says simply "he'll have to live with that." Like any good farmer, Kolb seems to specialize in mending fences.

He'll probably need all of that quality he can muster as Peel's collision course with Environment Minister Ruth Grier over the Britannia dump expansion reaches its climax in the next few months. Peel has defied an order to keep the dump open, but faces the stark reality of having no place to dump its garbage sometime later this year. In the middle of the political maelstrom that confrontation will cause, the unruffled guy trying to calm everyone down and get some decisions made, will be Emil Kolb.