

MONITORING FOR LEAD DONE DURING ALL WATERMAIN PROJECTS

Continued from page 1

cent compliant with provincial regulations for lead.

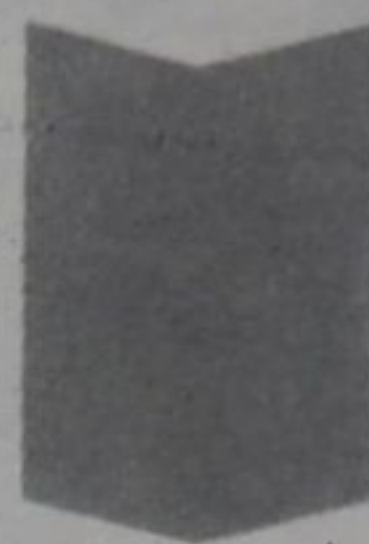
"The reports in the media indicate that the presence of lead in water is largely a result of public infrastructure. This is not the case in Halton Region," says the statement. "Halton's drinking water is safe to drink and the potential for lead in our drinking water system is extremely low in our community."

The Region, which is responsible for water purification throughout the four local municipalities, has replaced all pipes in the public system that were manufactured with lead and old cast-iron watermain.

"Since the cast-iron watermain replacement program was completed, lead services have been observed three times within the public right-of-way and those services were removed," Halton staff wrote.

"As part of our continuous monitoring, we investigate the neighbourhood for the presence of lead as part of any watermain pro-

THE ISSUE: LEAD IN DRINKING WATER
LOCAL IMPACT: WHILE OLDER HOMES AND SCHOOLS MAY BE AT RISK OF HAVING LEAD FROM AGED PLUMBING FIXTURES IN THEIR WATER, HALTON SAYS THE WATER IT PROVIDES RESIDENTS IS SAFE TO DRINK.



ject or at the time of a watermain break. If lead is observed, Halton Region takes immediate corrective action and replaces the service line or connection."

With lead being a commonly used building material decades ago, Region officials cautioned that there may be lead in the water from pipe fittings and connections in older homes built before 1975.

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton issued a statement in response to the Star investigation that says he

will bring a motion forth at the next regional council meeting that encourages residents to replace any lead water pipes in their homes with safe alternatives.

"I will also be writing to the provincial Minister of Education about water safety standards in our schools," said Burton.

In March, Health Canada cut the federal lead guideline in half — to 5 parts per billion (ppb) from 10 ppb — to reflect the neurotoxin's health risks. Ontario has for now kept its benchmark at 10 ppb while it reviews Ottawa's new guideline.

According to the Region, the Halton Regional Laboratory has tested 3,604 Halton water samples for lead — both public and private — since 2007, and the results showed a 99.3 per cent compliance rating.

But in Halton's aging school system, the Star investigation revealed that the Halton District School Board had 304 exceedances in the past two years — one of the highest totals among school boards in the province.

Lead fixtures, including taps

and water fountains, were historically used in school plumbing and many remain in place today as the main culprits of elevated lead levels in drinking water.

"We regularly test our drinking water fixtures, and if exceedances are detected, we implement appropriate measures based on the direction and guidance from the Halton Region Health Department," said Steve Allum, manager of environmental programs with the district school board.

In addition to flushing the lines and installing filters, the board removes lead-laced fixtures, he said in a written statement.

"In those instances, labour and materials are usually around a few hundred dollars. If fixture replacement is necessary, the full cost can range into the thousands."

But school board officials say the province has not been dealing with the added costs of removing lead.

"There hasn't really been much discussion from the Ministry of Education to us about how to respond to this," said Maia Pucet-

ti, superintendent of facility services for the Halton District School Board.

The Ministry of Education said that while it allocates funding to school boards, those boards are responsible for deciding how the funds are spent, "as they are in the best position to determine their renewal priorities and local needs."

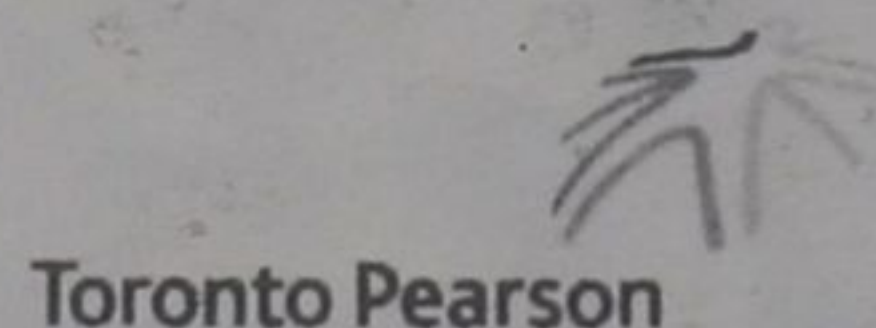
Halton is working to educate homeowners on how to check their plumbing and also offers residents water testing for lead levels, which can be secured by calling 311 or emailing accesshalton@halton.ca.

For more information visit halton.ca or hdsb.ca.

-with files from Robert Cribb



STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Following a lengthy investigation by the Toronto Star about lead in Canada's drinking water, we looked closer at how safe the water is in Halton, and how local authorities and politicians are responding to the national exposé.



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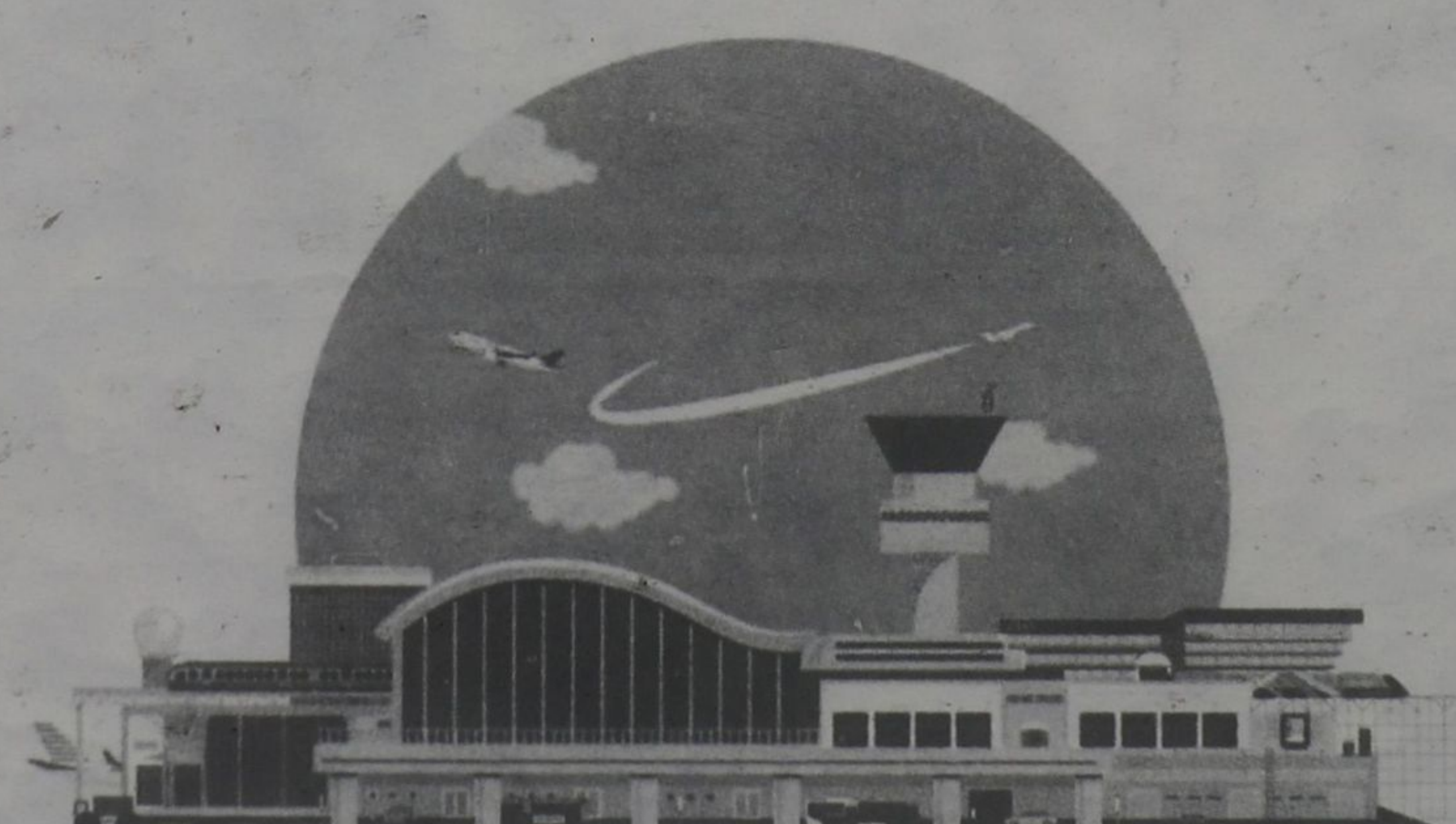
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WHEN:

Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

WHERE:

Milton Seniors' Activity Centre
 500 Childs Dr, Milton, ON L9T 5G2

For more information, please email community.engagement@gtaa.com or call 416-776-5739