



Photo by Barrie Erskine

FIRST STEPS: The longest journey may begin with the first step but newlyweds Esmaralda and Matt Pitman found the stepping a little dicey at Gairloch Gardens thanks to the damp conditions and geese droppings. That's Liam Kilmartin, Lisa Pitman and Angeliue Julien following in the footsteps of the bride and groom.

Flamborough to remain with Hamilton

By Irene Gentle
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

The wedding has been officially called off.

Skyrocketing taxes made a proposed merger between Flamborough and neighboring regions a non-starter, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Tony Clement has decided.

"To protect the taxpayers, Flamborough is best served by staying in Hamilton," said Clement. "That's the best solution for people of this region."

Earlier this year, the minister had opened the door for Flamborough to reshape its borders in order to avoid being swallowed by the new City of Hamilton.

That launched a flurry of activity as potential partners such as Halton, Brant County and Waterloo Region attempted to pinpoint the true costs of a union.

A proposal to merge the most populous part of Flamborough with Burlington — making it a part of Halton — was heartily endorsed by Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac as well as Flamborough Mayor Ted McMeekin.

But their arguments didn't sway Regional Council, which decided to reject Flamborough's advances in a tight vote after a marathon special meeting.

He decided the costs would be too high for a merger with any place but Hamilton.

"Our goal is to provide taxpayers in Flamborough and surrounding municipalities with the best possible service at the lowest costs," said Clement. "The facts are clear. Taxes would be too high under the Flamborough proposal."

Bars enlisted by police to raise date rape drug awareness

By Howard Mozel
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

In a concerted bid to deal with the issue of date rape drugs, several local bars are continuing to work hand-in-glove with the Halton Violence Prevention Council (HVPC).

As part of its ongoing Rape Drug Awareness Campaign, the HVPC has issued informative posters and coasters for placement inside establishments and is offering short seminars on drug related sexual assault to the staff of bars and restaurants.

"It was a natural extension," said Julie Pehar of the Halton Rape Crisis Centre.

In Oakville, the bars taking part in the campaign include Monaghan's Sports Pub and Grill, The Three Judges, The Bearded Collie, Rocky McKools, Heatwave, The Roxbury, The Oarhouse Sports Bar and Grill, The Cage (in Sheridan College), The Corner Pocket, The Duck and Firkin, The Coach and Four, Dicks. (There are more in Burlington, Milton, Georgetown and Acton.)

Campaign organizers are quick to point out that the participating bars are not necessarily ones with problems regarding this issue but instead see the value in public awareness.

"What we're trying to accomplish is to raise awareness and education," said Halton Region Public Health Nurse Janet Dawson. "It's the first line of defense."

The initiative is a direct result of predators using knock-out drugs to render sexual assault victims of both genders helpless, in social settings from bars to house parties.

Training of servers part of new program

The initial component of the campaign centred around the logo of two identical drinks under the headline "One will quench your thirst. The other could set you up for rape. Which would you drink?"

The posters that were distributed to bars, restaurants, clubs and other rape crisis centres across Ontario feature invaluable information which not only alerts potential victims but also reassures those victimized that it is not

their fault and that they should take immediate action.

With Halton Region Health Department funding, the next step was to issue the approximately 45,000 yellow coasters which appeal to patrons to watch their drinks to reduce their risk. (Leftover posters were re-distributed too.) On the back are several emergency numbers, including the Halton Rape Crisis Centre's 24-hour line (875-1555) and, of

course, 911.

Pehar explained that the coasters took a while to design since organizers did not want to sugar coat their message but be palatable for bar owners. Pehar said they struggled with putting the word "rape" on the coasters since some owners felt such a "heavy social message" flew in the face of the mood of their establishments. Other came right on board.

The training of bar staff is a proactive approach to enable servers to recognize potential victims and help to intervene. Staff are shown a short video, are taught to distinguish symptoms of drugging and are run through various scenarios to help better understand the actions they can take.

Drug related sexual assault is currently not included in the Smart Serve Training Program. To contact Janet Dawson, call 825-6060 ext. 7443.

According to Pehar, organizers are now looking for new sources of funding - corporate or private - to maintain the momentum.

While Rohypnol (flunitrazepam) has been blamed as the main culprit - it is colourless and odourless - there are other substances used to drug victims. These range from the easiest to obtain (alcohol) to countless illegal compounds. (Rohypnol is not available legally in Canada or the United States.)

GBH (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is another predatory drug which is a clear liquid ideal for mixing in drinks. Like Rohypnol, it can cause short-term amnesia, making it difficult for victims to remember what transpired while being assaulted.

Stop yourself from being a victim

Drug-related rape can happen to anyone, male or female. The following is a checklist of valuable information that can help you or someone you love from becoming a victim.

- Drug related rape can happen anywhere, not just clubs or raves, so be vigilant.
- Always keep your drink (alcoholic or otherwise) in sight, even take it with you when you dance.
- Accept drinks only from bartenders or servers.
- At social gatherings, don't except open-container drinks from anyone.
- Look out for each other at social gatherings.
- The drugs used are often colourless, odourless, tasteless and difficult to detect in any kind of drink.
- If you experience dizziness, extreme drowsiness or other sudden and unexplained symptoms, call someone you trust. Go to the hospital and try

and save a sample of your drink for testing.

The Halton Rape Crisis Centre can be contacted at 825-3622.

Effects of drug related rape may include mild to moderate impairment of motor co-ordination; impaired thought and memory; drowsiness, lethargy, fatigue and confusion; occasional nausea or vertigo; slurred speech; even hallucinations on occasion.

The effects of any drug depend on a variety of factors: the user's size and age; the amount taken; the manner taken (orally, injection, etc.); in combination with other substances such as alcohol; the user's psychological and emotional state.

Rohypnol may have garnered the most attention but many substances are employed by predators to tranquilize their prey: triazolam (Halcion), gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), scopolamine, burundaga, ketamine, amphetamines, barbiturates, cocaine, marijuana and opiates.

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