

Information for seniors lacking, report says

Staff at three public information centres across Halton have challenged a regional report's suggestion that a statistical data base is needed to provide general information to area senior citizens.

In separate letters to the region's health and social services committee, officials of the Acton Social Services and Information Centre, North Halton Contact Centre and Information Burlington warned that such a move would duplicate their own efforts.

Their comments came in response to Phase 2 of a regional consultant's report. Health and Social Services for the Elderly in Halton. While continuing support of the existing information centres is recom-

mended, the report also suggests establishing a statistical data base, worth about \$60,000 a year, to meet stated concerns by some seniors that they have trouble obtaining general information.

"We feel it is a duplication of service for the region to establish a central information data base when the existing information centres are giving this service either by telephone or in person," Contact Centre director Irene MacLaren told the committee.

"Each centre in the area where it is established is quite efficient; extra funds would be welcomed to expand future service and pay extra help, full-time or part-time," Acton Social Services Centre executive

director Peggie Balkind said the need for a central information centre, which she too questions, should not be confused with the need for a statistical data base, which she said the region "could best develop and maintain."

"However, in the area of services available for seniors, it may be that this type of general information is already available and accessible," she said.

"I understand that the other information centres are also well used by seniors in their area, although there will always be people who are not aware of a particular service. Perhaps more advertising of each centre

would be an appropriate avenue for regional concern."

Balkind also suggested appointing a liaison person to join the seniors' advisory committee and represent the concerns of the region and its information agencies.

Information Burlington manager Betty Thomas took exception to the regional report's appraisal of existing information.

"The report indicated that such information was neither current nor comprehensive," she told the committee. "A serious omission of any mention of existing information centres was evident."

Thomas noted that many of the 24,500 enquiries answered by her agency in 1983

involved seniors' concerns. About 100 seniors attended a recent four-part seminar on those same concerns, she added.

"Over the past 13 years (since the agency was founded), an extensive data base for seniors' services has been compiled," she wrote. "The proposed development of a statistical data base at the region would duplicate such information, and at an estimated total annual cost of \$60,000 would appear to be an expensive and unnecessary undertaking."

The matter has been referred to Halton's director of social services for further deliberation.

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Ontario's Bicentennial flag was officially released into Halton Hills, when the Bicentennial flag was raised at the administration building Thursday morning. Helping Mayor Russ Miller are Councillors Rick Bonnette and Peter Norton and RCMP Constable Rejean Collard.

Tension floats away in tank

by Paul Dorsey

They say it suspends the senses, leaving the mind alone to probe for new levels of awareness. They say it simulates the effects of weightlessness, easing the stress that gravity imposes on our bodies.

They say it speeds up the healing process for broken limbs and twisted joints. And they say it amounts to a return to the womb, if only for an hour at a time.

But mostly, the isolation tank—developed for scientific research 20 years ago and now available for public use locally—is a prime device for sheer relaxation.

John De Boer of RR 2 Acton had tried out isolation tanks at Toronto's sole outlet for a Vancouver-based operation but quickly realized the drive back home cut into whatever relaxation he'd managed to build up. The solution was to get a tank of his own.

De Boer took things one step further and opened his own "shop" this week, Solitude Systems near Guelph and Delrex in Georgetown.

With some elaborate plans to gear the shop to his clients' needs and expectations, De Boer currently offers a 4x8 foot isolation tank he designed himself.

Inside the plywood housing is a vinyl liner that contains about a foot of extremely dense Epsom salts solution, heated to about 94 degrees Fahrenheit, about skin temperature.

Here's the procedure: the "tanker" or "floater" is escorted into the tank room after signing a waiver that indicates he is not subject to mental illness and is not under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Left alone, he undresses and showers, then places cotton wool in each ear and covers any small cuts or sores with vaseline.

Then it's into the tank via a swinging hatch that remains unlocked. He floats high in the salt solution, hearing little if anything because of the cotton and water, seeing nothing once the hatch is closed.

First-time tankers are virtually unanimous that the sensation of weightlessness, adrift inside the relatively spacious tank, is alone worth the fee.

Without his surroundings placing pressure on any part of his body, the floater stretches his limbs and feels the tension drain from his body. Slowly the floater stops listening to his own breathing and watching for any visual sensations. Deprived of sensory input, the mind surely and steadily takes over while the body rests like it never rested before.

There's no danger of drowning, even if you fall asleep, because of the solution's high density, and claustrophobia doesn't seem to be a problem because of the total lack of sensory orientation. Only the combined smell of wood and Epsom salts remind you where you are from time to time.

So it goes for an hour at a time. De Boer re-enters the tank room to softly rap on the tank, signalling one hour. He leaves, and the floater can climb out to shower off the salt, or remain for longer if he wishes.

Anxious to become a daily floater himself, De Boer heard the full range of claims about just how far the isolation tank can take you. Pro footballers use it to heal their injuries faster. Devotees of transcendental meditation and biofeedback are conducting various experiments from inside the tank. The more adventurous claim to regress to the womb state.

De Boer stresses, though, that relaxation is the tank's main function. Several major hotel chains in the U.S. now offer isolation tanks alongside gyms and swimming pools. In Europe, few towns the size of Halton Hills would be without an isolation tank centre.

So thoroughly relaxing is an hour in the tank that business executives swarm to such centres on lunch breaks or after work. The revitalizing process can be startling, far more effective than a half-hour catnap.

De Boer is charging \$20 for each visit to the tank but plans a series of introductory offers. If you try out the tank and want to return, three more visits will cost \$40 and you must make those visits yourself. After that, a five-time-for-\$75 fee is charged, and those visits can be "transferred" to other customers.

Region passes on phone porn battle

A problem with high school students in Thunder Bay phoning long distance to hear pornographic recordings had Halton regional staff checking out men's magazines recently.

Halton council was asked to endorse a resolution being circulated by the city of Thunder Bay aimed at curbing the use of telephones for "solicited obscene phone calls via U.S. toll-free numbers".

Council took no action on the resolution, stopping short of sending a report on the problem by Chief Administrative Officer Dennis Perlin to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

Thunder Bay authorities were responding to "grave concern and shock" expressed by citizens over the accessibility of phone numbers through which the caller can hear a 60-second pre-recorded message featuring blatant sexual references.

"This number, which is advertised in pornographic magazines as being 'toll-free,' has appeared on the telephone bill of many parents whose children have been calling this number, unaware that it would appear on the household telephone bill," the resolution from Thunder Bay says.

The city asked Halton to join in expressing "our strong displeasure" over the matter and asking authorities to remedy the problem.

A second resolution asks the Ministry of Education to launch school programs about pornography, while a third asks Thunder Bay Telephone to help Bell Canada investigate the possibility of reversing charges on the calls, so that the New York company

behind them ends up footing the bill.

In his report to council, Perlin called the Thunder Bay resolutions contradictory and contended that the solution should come through legislation.

"The total number of these advertisements apparently is incredible," he said. "I am informed that in one magazine there were six pages devoted to advertising various telephone numbers and ap-

proximately 44 separate telephone numbers listed."

While some Ontario municipalities have already endorsed the Thunder Bay resolutions, Perlin noted, many are passing bylaws to restrict the display and sale of such magazines.

"The primary problem is the availability of such publications, which I am told contain material which is far more offensive than phone call invitations," Perlin said.

Spending for United Way waste, Whiting maintains

Hiring consultants to determine if Halton can support a fourth United Way agency is a waste of money, says Halton Hills Councillor Dave Whiting.

Mr. Whiting was speaking against the region contributing \$2,000 to a \$6,000 study to determine if Halton Hills can support a United Way agency.

"You want some very basic answers to some basic questions. Why do you need a consultant?" he asked Jarvis Sheridan, chairman of the Halton United Way Task Force, who spoke about the proposed study to the health and social services committee three weeks ago.

Mr. Sheridan said the study would be conducted by consultant Michael Pennock, former director of Hamilton's social planning council.

The study will examine funds currently being raised in Halton Hills; services currently provided and if there's room for more fund raising Mr. Sheridan said.

Burlington Mayor Roly Bird agreed with Whiting. He too could not see the need for hiring a consultant. Halton has a social planning council, he said, asking why the council couldn't conduct the study.

"The United Way task force is a creation of the social planning council anyway," he said, adding that even the consultant is a former social planning council director.

Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy, however, urged the committee to support the study. Otherwise, said the former Halton Hills mayor, "it will set the whole issue of creating a sole United Way agency for Halton back."

Solitude tanks... A novel way to relax

by Mark Holmes

Solitude. Most people avoid it like the plague but thanks to a revolutionary new service there are hundreds of people realizing the potential of such a state.

There are several names for the service but the most common name for it is sensory deprivation.

The purpose of sensory deprivation is, as the name suggests, to deprive a person of all physical sensations leaving the person in a trance-like state.

To achieve this the tank, a four foot by four foot by eight foot enclosed bathtub, is filled with a salt-water solution heated to 94 degrees Fahrenheit, which is the same temperature as skin, and neither light or sound can penetrate the walls.

It would seem to reporters Mark Holmes and Paul Dorsey, who tried out these tanks, that such an environment would be claustrophobic but in actuality the sensations were the opposite.

The initial and most shocking sensation

that the tank produces is the buoyancy that the salt water gives. It is hard to acustom your body to the sensation of floating on water without the fear of sinking below the surface.

The utter silence combined with the warm, damp darkness must be almost the same as prenatal conditions in a mother's womb and strangely enough both of us remarked on the sensation.

We also both experienced feelings of floating in deep starless space.

The sound of our own breathing was the only thing the struck our eardrums. If we held our breath we could hear our own heart beats.

The womb-like feeling, the sensation of floating in space and the breathing were the only common experiences between us. In both cases the entire hour of tanking was undoubtedly one of the strangest things either one of us has ever experienced.

(Continued on B2)

Transport for disabled

Ontario's Ministry of Transportation and Communications will provide half the \$48,300 Halton region needs for a transportation study investigating the needs of the disabled. DelCan, a consulting firm, will be paid \$37,700 to conduct the study while regional staff is expected to incur the balance of the cost.

Men at work

Halton region's public works department currently has outside consultants working on 28 different projects, according to a recent report. Among the oldest projects listed are several dating back to early 1976, although all are nearing completion.

Hornby bridge

With a number of bridge-building projects for the province under its corporate belt, the consulting firm of Parker Consultants Ltd. has been hired to provide preliminary and detailed designs for the reconstruction of the Steeles Ave. bridge near Hornby. Plans call for the final design to be ready by May 1985, and actual construction to proceed thereafter.

Region briefs

Surface treatment

MSO Construction of Rexdale has been selected as low bidder to handle surface treatment work needed on roads across Halton Region. With regional and municipal staff cooperating on the project, including inspection, total cost has been set at \$239,752.14. Of that amount, Halton Hills share will be \$49,222.29, the highest among the five great municipalities.

Sealing those cracks

In a second year tender, Halton Region and the area municipalities have selected the McMillan Group Ltd. of Mississauga to seal and repair cracks in roads in Halton Hills, Mississauga and Burlington. The worth of the work is \$1.2 million. The project will prevent potholes, improve road surface and extend road life. The project will cost \$1.2 million, with \$500,000 worth of the work being done by Halton Hills.

Friends-in-Deed

Anne Dodds elected president

by Trina Noel

During the Friends-In-Deed meeting of April 24, the election of officers was conducted with the following results: Ann Dodds president; Emily Price vice-president; Secretary Joan Parker; and Marion Keelan treasurer.

A donation was given to our group by the Dublin Women's Institute.

A while back a questionnaire was given to each member to fill out. So for all the absent members, do not forget to bring it with you at the next meeting.

A wheelchair clinic has been arranged for Saturday, May 26, at Capital Ford in Georgetown. Victoria Wheelchair from Kitchener will be providing this service. Three or more persons could reserve the ActiVan in advance. For more information please call Pat Woode at 877-1436.

A reminder to everyone who shops at Dominion and Zehrs stores to save their cash register tapes for us. Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday evening May 29, and we will have a demonstration in dough art. New members are always welcome.

RR 2 Acton resident John De Boer, 23, is a former chemical engineering student who enjoyed his experiences in isolation tanks at a Toronto centre so much he opened his own centre in Georgetown this week. Customers float atop a high-density salt solution inside the pitch black tanks, depriving the mind of sensations to create a thoroughly relaxing environment.