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## Editorial

# Try talking

It appears the Halton Board of Education and area municipalities may have to resort to an age-old method of mediation seldom used anymore, to resolve the issue of Halton's indoor pools.

It's called "communicating."

So far, we've heard little more than sabre-rattling from either side, and no one seems interested in sitting down to try and hammer out an agreement that will best serve the taxpayers' interests.

It can safely be said that no one really wants the indoor pools closed.

But on one hand, we have the board of education grasping for any possible means of reducing the school tax burden it can find. On the other hand, we have the municipalities wanting nothing to do with anything that will require them to raise taxes unnecessarily.

Now matters have evolved into little more than a staring contest.

For the taxpayers, it's a lot like being the owner of two horses in a race where all the other entries have been scratched.

Suspense is minimal. And while you know you're going to win, you also know you're going to lose.

# Not safe yet



## Editor's Notebook

Mike Turner  
Herald Editor

If you have any relatives living in the southern United States, it might not be a bad idea to drop them a line and let them know what kind of "winter" we're having up here.

I mean when the people of the sunny south give their countrymen in Buffalo so much static about how cold and snowy it gets there, what do you think their impression of Canada must be?

It's phenomenal. Usually this time of year we're trying to contend with at least three feet of snow and bitter cold weather. Do you suppose this has anything to do with last summer's drought?

The worst thing about this whole weather situation is trying to make any plans. Sure it's dry now, but who knows what tomorrow will bring, or the day after that. People planning to go skiing have to be very selective.

I swore this was going to be the year that I got back into cross-country skiing. The invigorating tracking through the snow in the great outdoors was beckoning, and I was actually pretty thrilled about the idea. But that, of course, is on "hold" now.

It's the same everywhere. Events that rely on the snow are being cancelled en masse - even events like those staged by the area conservation authorities which have become annual traditions.

And you know, I suppose I could cope with all this if it weren't for the fact that I know one thing.

As Yogi so appropriately put it, "It ain't over 'til it's over."  
I know, deep down, that we're

still going to get it. It may be a week or two... It may even wait until March, when we're at the point where we think we're out of the woods. But it's definitely going to hit us.

Most likely, it will be one of those surprise storms that manifests itself in very short order, and catches us when our defences are down. It may even be one of those storms that we'll be talking about for years to come.

For now, we can enjoy what we've got. But bear in mind, eventually we'll pay.

It's just Mother Nature's way of telling us not to take anything for granted, a message that'll never get through.

# Illegal gun trade is big business here

By RENNIE MACKENZIE  
Ottawa Bureau  
Thomson News Service

A variety of destructive weapons manufactured for armies or faraway battlefields have been trickling into Canada.

The weapons, ranging from compact submachine-guns to large-calibre anti-aircraft guns, are being imported by dealers who smell big profits on fast-moving inventories.

It's a lucrative trade that is still in its infancy and police, alarmed by the presence of the weapons, want it choked off as soon as possible.

At the request of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the federal justice department is considering changes to the Criminal Code to block imports of military weapons.

The association was first alerted a year ago by police in Alberta who reported that gun dealers in several cities had arranged a shipment of 916 Israeli machine-guns, including 25 anti-aircraft type, for retail sale throughout the West.

# Animal rights under scrutiny

Animal wars.

A former cabinet minister here once told me that nothing - not even abortion or capital punishment - can stir the average Canadian as much as cruelty to animals.

He was talking about the phenomenal negative reaction the then-Conservative government received when it suggested using pound animals in research laboratories.

People saw it as causing pain to pets.

Naturally, what came to be called the Dog and Cat bill was quickly withdrawn.

Now, thanks to New Democrat Bud Wildman, the song of animal rights is sounding again, albeit to a different tune.

Wildman has a private member's bill before the legislature that proposes major restrictions on the use of two of the most commonly used experiments involving animals.

It would apply to all non-medical, and to unnecessary medical, experimentation.

In a remarkably close free vote that crossed party lines, it passed the legislature 33-30, and is now before committee.

Wildman has quite legitimate hopes that it will be one of those rare private members' bills that become law. If it does, it will be the most controversial ever to do so.

The tests in question are the Draize Eye-Irritancy Test and the classical LD50 acute toxicity test.

The former is used to determine how irritating a substance can be if applied to the skin or around the



## Queen's Park

Derek Nelson  
Thomson News Service

eyes; the latter discovers how much of a substance is required to kill half the animals exposed to it.

The purpose is to ensure that commercial substances are "safe" for human use before going on the market.

When explained that way, it sounds very clinical and important.

### DRIPPED INTO EYE

But Wildman puts it differently:

"In the Draize test, a chemical substance such as bleach, shaving cream or deodorant is dripped into one of the animal's eyes, the other serving as a control.

"The damage to the (animal's) eye is measured according to the size of the area damaged. The animals scream, claw at their eyes and frantically try to dislodge the painful product, but are restrained from doing so.

"Needless to say, the animal's eye suffers ulceration, bleeding, gross destruction and ultimately blindness."

In the LD50 test, Wildman said, the procedure can involve "force-feeding a given substance," such as lipstick, shampoo, or oven cleaner to an animal and then watching it for two weeks of "diar-

rhea, gasping, loss of appetite, salivation, vomiting, excess defecation, bleeding from the eyes, nose and mouth, wheezing, convulsions, paralysis, and, for some, death."

But beyond being painful, the tests are unnecessary, Wildman claims. Everything from computer models to tissue cultures can be used to achieve the same aim.

And, he adds, he is carefully allowing exemptions for tests deemed by the government's veterinary branch to be necessary for medical research.

It is a pitch hard to resist, aimed as it is at the heartstrings of anyone moved by the ball of fluff that is a young rabbit, or by memories of household pets.

Whether it is a fair pitch is an open question.

Liberal Jim McGuigan, for example, objected to claims such as that bleach is being tested in animal eyes. Veterinarians "consider this notion ridiculous," he said.

Moreover, animals are used in tests (about 2,000 animals annually, he suggested, many of them rats), because there is no alternative method of determining, for instance, the "hazards to human eyesight which are posed by commonly used materials at home or in the workplace."

In short, Wildman and McGuigan don't even agree on the basic facts that underlie the issue.

Perhaps getting agreement at that level should be everyone's first priority.



They were purchased for about \$40,000 and were being offered for sale for about \$800,000.

"It is evident that the profit in this venture is extremely high," the association commented in its annual report on organized crime.

The Alberta shipment, and others smuggled or imported into Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland, were seized by police and federal revenue officials under regulations that prevent the sale of fully-automatic weapons. The importers have made basic conversions to the weapons so they cannot fire in the automatic mode, but police argue they can be reconverted, simply and quickly in many cases.

At the justice department, Richard Mosley, senior general counsel in the criminal and family law policy directorate, is considering the association's request for tighter controls on the military weapons. He explained that the current definition of a prohibited weapon has stirred disagreements in the courts.

NOT DIFFICULT

The gun dealers argue the steps they have taken to render the weapons incapable of automatic fire are adequate, but there are cases where armorers have demonstrated in court how quickly they can be restored to full working order, Mosley said. The task is not difficult for anyone with a basic knowledge of gunsmithing, he added.

Mosley has been discussing the problem with provincial officials and he won't say what alternatives or proposals his office may offer to the government. But any solution will require an amendment to the Criminal Code, he said. That means the measure will require the approval of Parliament and that could take time.

The association of chiefs has warned that weapons seizures have increased, that gun running has become one of the most disturbing forms of commercial smuggling, and that more import certificates are being issued for weapons of war than for legitimate sporting weapons.

Calgary police Supt. Bob McKay

said his department is still holding the shipment of Israeli Uzi machine-guns and a variety of other military-style weapons.

There have been no reports of any military weapons being used in the commission of any crimes in the province, he said, but there is still a concern that the guns may be in circulation.

Gun dealers tell police the weapons are intended for collectors. But at the Ottawa headquarters of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, executive director Donald Cassidy wonders.

He remembers a massive police raid directed at smugglers on an Ontario Indian reservation near Cornwall last year. Among the discoveries was a cache of Uzi ammunition, he said.

Any proposals to close the border to military weapons will likely be met by stiff opposition from the gun dealers and collectors.

Mosley said collectors feel very strongly about the issue.

"Some people believe it is their inalienable right to own an Uzi," he said.