

# Outlook on Halton Hills

## No snow causes change in plans

By RICH FLAHERTY  
Herald Special

Cross-country skiers have been understandably disappointed so far this season with the lack of snow at local conservation areas that offer cross-country trails.

Both Credit Valley and Halton Region Conservation authorities are hopeful alternate programs, such as hiking, can be put in place and the outlook on the rest of the season will be favorable. The main contention of many of the conservation areas offering groomed cross-country trails is the lack of accumulation of snow needed for the six-inch base for adequate skiing. This has partially been attributed to unseasonably warm temperatures in January.

The Terra Cotta Conservation Area has had a difficult time with the lack of snowfall.

"It's horrible. We've opened (for cross-country) one day," said Sue Powell, public relations officer for the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. Credit Valley has jurisdiction over Terra Cotta, and it is their only conservation area offering cross-country trails.

The lack of snow has also affected other seasonal events offered by Terra Cotta. Recently, they cancelled their annual Winter Sweetheart Carnival. This made events such as a cross-country ski race and showman-building impossible.

The weather has not stopped all activity at Terra Cotta however. Guides have adapted barren cross-country trails for interpretive hikes involving nature study.

The Halton Region Conservation Authority and its ski areas have found themselves a little more adaptable to the lack of snow.

"It's affected the cross-country skiing in a large way," said Sandy Bell, manager of conservation areas for Halton Region. "I think possibly, some other places that have planned (winter) events have started looking up north."

Mr. Bell feels that though the lack of snow base has affected attendance at local conservation areas, it will not be detrimental to

organized competitive winter events, as many of these are planned for later in the season.

"We work with what we get," said Mr. Bell. Conservation areas in Halton adapt much like Terra Cotta.

"We still take groups out," said Mr. Bell, on the substitution of hiking from skiing.

This attitude is reflected in both the Crawford Lake and Mountsberg Conservation Areas in Halton.

"At the beginning of the season it wasn't as good as we'd hoped," said Susan Thomson, education co-

ordinator at Crawford Lake. "I think people that want to get out (to the parks), tend to get out anyway."

Crawford Lake also has cross-country trails that are used for hiking. In addition, to cope with the lack of snow, events like their Winter Celebration were re-planned. Activities like a winter scavenger hunt were offered in place of a snowman-building contest.

"Both this year and last year have not been that good," said Mr. Bell.

The situation at Mountsberg Conservation Area is the same. "The weather has a big part in what we do," said Jim Aikenhead, education co-ordinator at Mountsberg. "We haven't had many people out for skiing."

The warm weather has had a positive effect as well. "It's not a bad winter for the animals," said Mr. Aikenhead.

Lack of activity has not caused a drop in full-time employment, and only minor cutbacks have been made with part-time help.

Prospects for those interested in downhill skiing look better.

"We've had very little problem," said Phil Mahon, assistant manager of the Kelso/Glen Eden Conservation Area. Mr. Mahon feels that the perception of the public concerning the lack of snowfall does not apply to the Glen Eden downhill facility.

"The ski conditions are very good," said Mr. Mahon, on the quality of the 90 per cent plus man-made snow on the slopes.

According to Mr. Mahon, man-made snow holds up better under warm weather and rains.

So far, for the season, it seems that downhill is the best local skiing around.

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