

## Town fires back

The town fired its own salvo in the ever-increasing push for development on Monday.

Councillors gave draft plan approval for 524 lots on the Eighth Line and 945 lots east of the Ninth Line for one month Monday.

Halton Hills Village Homes had asked for an extension of one year.

Earlier this year Halton Hills Village Homes sent a letter to Halton Region threatening to take any water allocation in the town to the Ontario Municipal Board. The firm said it had paid a substantial amount of money - for services and the expansion of Georgetown's sewage treatment plant - and it wanted to be put at the front of the line when it comes to water allocation.

Currently, 34 developers are lined up with proposals for building 5,418 homes in town, while water exists for only 1,350 units.

Now, Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller says he wants Halton Hills Village Homes project manager Toby Barwick to rescind that letter to the Region.

"I don't want to appear to be holding a gun to their head, but I also don't want them to hold a gun to our heads," the mayor said Monday.

The idea of allowing a one-month extension instead of the year the developer requested is a good way to send a message to developers that they should take a softer approach with the town.

Yes, Halton Hills Village Homes did put up a lot of money for services and sewage plant expansion, but they've admitted that the months, even years of delays have primarily been their own fault.

Now, after floundering around themselves, they can't expect to just dump everything on the mayor's desk and say "sign here."

The town has waited for them, now they can wait for the town while the problem of water allocation gets resolved.

Coun. Joe Hewitt said it doesn't seem right to deny draft approval to Halton Hills Village Homes.

The town's not denying draft approval. It's merely sending a not-so-subtle message that it won't be steamrolled by developers.

Said Coun. Hewitt: "I don't think you can say they're out there getting draft approvals and just sitting on them. We are in the driver's seat."

The town has waited a long time for development in Georgetown South. It needs the extra tax base. And all it's been able to do in the driver's seat of a stalled car, is honk its horn.

## Be safe at Christmas



Brian MacLeod  
Editor's Notebook

in the way of colorful lights make your house a bit safer.

—Always use only lights intended for indoor use indoors. Outdoor lights burn hotter and are a fire hazard when used indoors;

—When you replace a bulb on a light string, check the voltage of wattage marked on the light set or on the packaging;

—Beware of octopus outlets, especially during the holiday season when additional demands are placed on electricity;

—When working on installing outdoor lighting, be sure to turn off the electricity;

—Don't use metallic fasteners, such as nails and tacks to hold strings of outdoor lights in place. Instead, use insulated tape to attach the electrical cords to buildings, being careful not to tape the cords over or along metal eavestroughs;

—Run all outdoor cords above ground keeping them out of puddles and snow;

—Tape all plug connections with plastic electrical tape to make them as watertight as possible.

Those of you who've strolled down the winding streets of Georgetown's subdivisions must have noticed the reams of Christmas lights adorning the windows and doors. But, inevitably some of those lights burn out, or short out the whole set.

One step further and the next telephone call will be to the fire department.

So the Canadian Standards Association has set out several safety tips to help those of you with electricity surrounding your home

## MPPs chuckle at survey

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park  
Thomson News Service



Last week was yuk, yuk time at the legislature, as the health status survey came under skeptical scrutiny.

That's the multimillion-dollar survey that will ask 50,000 Ontarians about their sex, eating and exercise habits, as well as about a bunch of other lifestyle stuff from drinking/driving to their relationships with parents and spouses.

Reporters being human, sex drew more interest than eating habits. Using the survey questions, they tried to elicit answers from the politicians.

Health Minister Elinor Caplan's reply was classic: "I've got a headache."

Premier David Peterson's (I'm told: I wasn't there) illustrated once again that he really doesn't have much of a sense of humor. His jesting with female reporters, in particular, was considered offensive by some observers.

Conservative MPP Bob Runciman asked Caplan in the

legislature whether it was appropriate to ask females (and only females) how old they were when they lost their virginity.

He was incensed at the survey's \$5.7-million price tag at a time when raw sewage is entering Ontario waterways, endangering the health of all around them.

But Caplan wasn't daunted.

All the questions were designed by "health planners and health policy experts," she replied. The reason for knowing when female virginity ends is that the risk of cervical cancer increases with early sexual intercourse, she added.

In short, what the province wants to do through its in-depth survey is to build a health profile of a representative sample of Ontarians. With that as a guide, it would then become easier to plan for future health-care needs.

That's assuming everyone answers honestly, of course, or that those who decline to answer are as representative of the whole as those who do.

But one was to wonder.

### DIFFERENCE

Someone once noted there is a considerable difference between "public opinion" and "popular sentiment." Popular sentiment is what a person believes. Public opinion is what the person says he believes when asked by pollsters, knowing full well what answer is expected of him.

That applies to almost any type

of survey, and a wide variety of opinions.

In such circumstances, people will reflect what they are required to believe.

One suspects the margin of error increases when the topic encompasses personal habits, whether sex, food or whatever.

Isn't it reasonable to assume that how the broader society views an activity - say the current permissiveness in regard to premarital sex - will influence the answers people will give about their own life?

Or take eating as another indicator: in our weight-conscious era, many people feel guilt about tubbiness, and will lie even to themselves about what they eat and how much. Will they necessarily tell the truth?

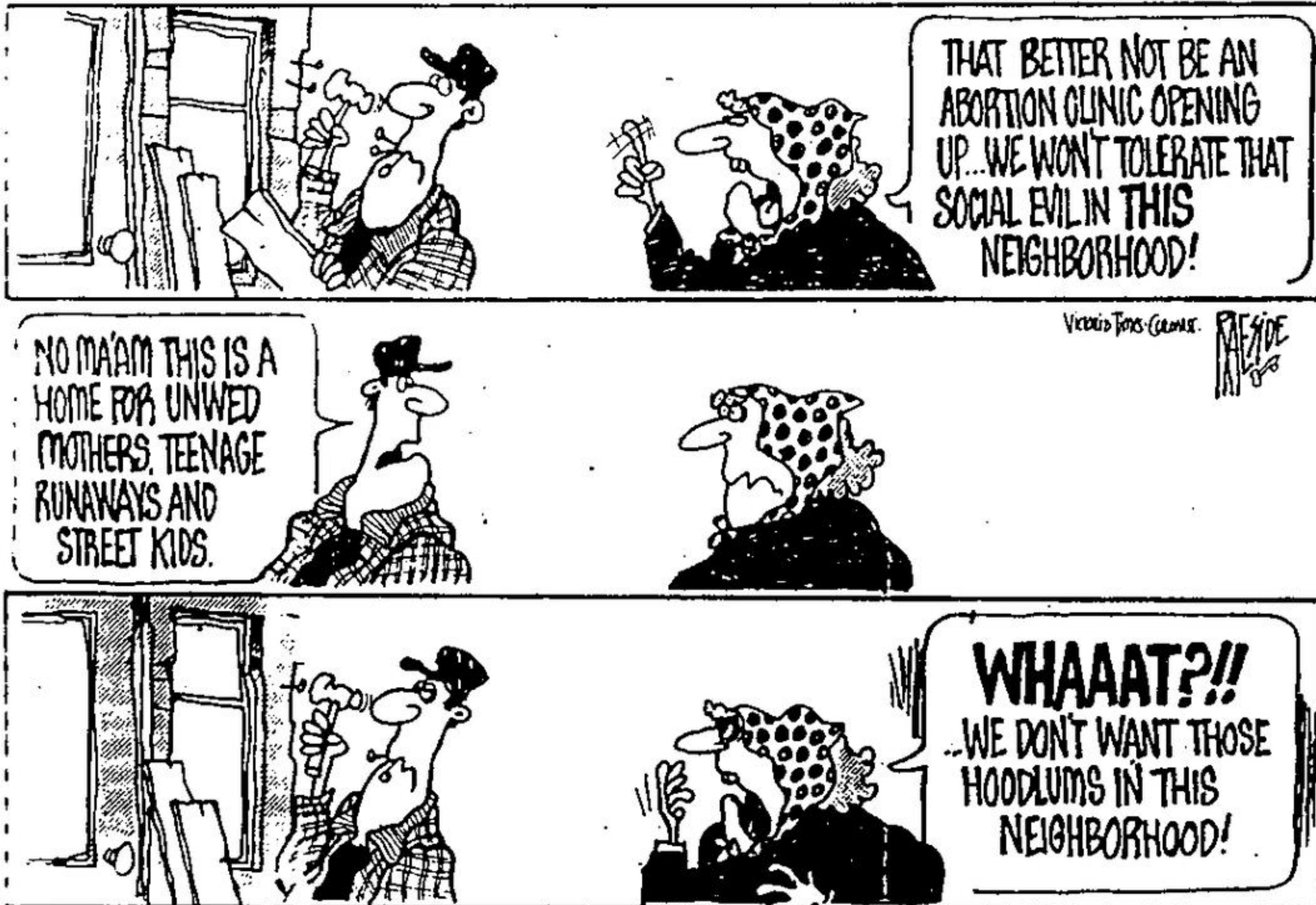
Admittedly, pollsters try to prevent people cheating on surveys by using a variety of techniques to spot liars.

And maybe they'll succeed.

But the incredible range of conclusions already drawn from polls of youth about whether kids are promiscuous or restrained in their sexual activity doesn't give one grounds for optimism.

There is a last point to be made.

The results of this survey will, as Caplan indicates, help construct provincial policy. Politicians are often criticized for formulating policy on the basis of public opinion polls. This is a good example of why the critics have a point.



## Broadbent highlights poverty

Vic Parsons

Ottawa Bureau  
Thomson News Service



In his last months as leader of the New Democratic Party, Ed Broadbent often spoke with passion and simple eloquence of the million children who live in poverty in Canada.

His final speech in the Commons as NDP leader was entirely about the suffering of many children in this country. At the Winnipeg convention he spent a good deal of time on the same subject in his last formal address to the party faithful.

What with all the concentration in Winnipeg on leadership, the Meech Lake constitutional accord, goods and services tax and free trade, Broadbent's pet issue of late got minimal attention.

It was the same when he made his Commons swansong on Nov. 24.

Broadbent's motion on child poverty was given unanimous approval by MPs, but it received sparse coverage from newshounds, who thrive on conflict.

Some reports dwelt on how few of his parliamentary colleagues attended Broadbent's final speech as leader. Others focused on a news story that he is about to be appointed head of a new federal centre for human rights and democratic development, adding only a couple of throwaway paragraphs on his speech. Few went into any depth on the content of his address.

One must ask if Canadians - especially politicians and media - are callous? Or are they so comfortable with the idea that an estimated 1.12-million children are inadequately housed and fed that the issue doesn't need to be treated as the scandal it is?

### ONE IN FOUR POOR

Think about it. That's one in every four children in the country.

Broadbent admitted that even he - as head of a party that sees itself as the social conscience of Canada - hadn't thought too much about the subject until last June, when a fact book on poverty was put out by the Canadian Council for Social Development.

"I frankly say that on that particular morning, I was totally surprised by how serious the problem of child poverty in Canada has become," he told MPs.

It's astonishing that the extent of child poverty should come as such a surprise to Broadbent. After all, several social agencies have been using estimates in the range of a million for some time.

But give Broadbent credit. He spoke often on the issue in the last six months of his leadership and his Commons motion called for action to end child poverty by the year 2000.

Specifically, Broadbent proposed a national conference, to include the provinces, municipalities, volunteer agencies, service clubs, labor, business and representatives of the poor, to talk about how the problem can be addressed.

He called for action to increase low-cost housing, higher minimum wages indexed to inflation and larger child tax credits and family allowances, also fully indexed.

Among Western industrial countries, said Broadbent, Canada has the second-highest rate of children living in severe poverty. (The United States is No. 1).

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