

# Underground water needs must be investigated

In last week's Queen's Park Report I discussed some of the things that I would like to see happen with the Niagara Escarpment lands. This week I would like to talk about something which affects, not only the Escarpment, but also the whole of Ontario - water. We swim in it and we sail on it. We turn on a tap and get a glass of it to drink. Unfortunately, we don't often think very much about it.

In an area like Halton North all the water we use for municipal systems comes from wells. Those outside the core of our municipalities use private wells. Without ample, clean ground water Milton and Halton Hills cannot survive. Municipal growth and the below average rainfall of the last few years have illustrated very clearly that our supplies of ground water are not infinite. If we are going to sustain our well and stream based water economy we are going to have to do a better job of managing the resource.

There is the argument that if we need more water and sewage capacity it would be best to build a big pipe from Lake Ontario. Or, as has been suggested, from Lake Huron where the water quality is better. It is possible that this may be the solution in the long term. However, regardless of what decisions are taken to solve our long term problems we still have the immediate shortages to solve.

The first step in solving any problem is to find out its size. The reality is that we don't know how much ground water is used in north Halton. The municipalities know



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what they are taking for their needs but the amount removed for private systems is not gathered together in any one place. Quarry owners pump for gravel washing and to keep their operations dry. Homeowners in the country use their wells for their families needs. Business and industries not linked to the municipal systems use more or less depending on their type of operation. Until we know the extent of our needs we can't begin to find a solution.

The need for water must be compared to the supply. Although we can't be sure of the exact size of our underground supplies it is possible to make some calculations about how quickly that supply is recharged and whether the water table is remaining relatively stable or changing. Obviously these calculations won't be perfect but they would provide some basis for

the future decisions that are going to have to be made.

In some ways this is the easy part of the solution. The difficult part is going to be the allocation of supply if that becomes necessary. If it becomes essential to say "no", who gets the bad news first?

Perhaps the question becomes a little easier if we reverse it and ask who gets the first place in line. I think that it is essential that people and agriculture should be guaranteed the first right to our water supplies. If we are forced to restrict our industrial growth to 'dry' industries until the supply of water is guaranteed then that is what will have to be done. Water must be viewed as a social resource. The ability to remove it from the ground should not imply any ownership or special rights.

This report has only addressed the problems associated with the quantity of water that is available. Next week I would like to discuss an even more significant problem. How do we maintain the quality of the water that we do have?



## Bonspiel donation

Dave Dunlop watches as his brother (left) Barry hands a \$2,272 cheque to the Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital foundation recently. Accepting the cheque was Mark Rochon, executive director at the hospital, who said the money raised by the Dunlop Insurance Bonspiel would be put to good use. The bonspiel had 48 participants. (Herald photo)

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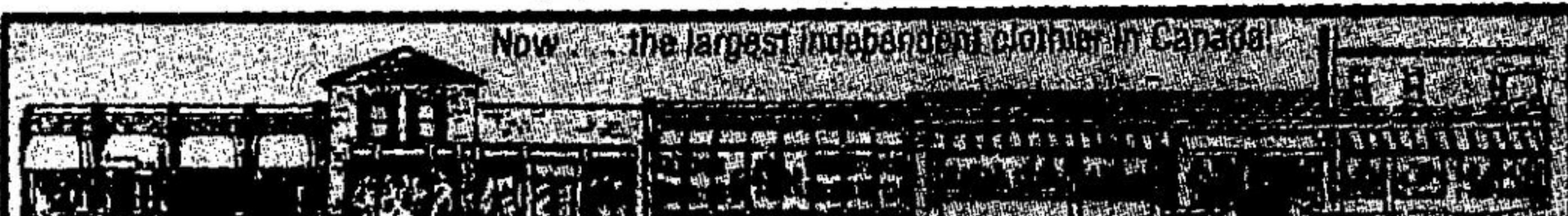
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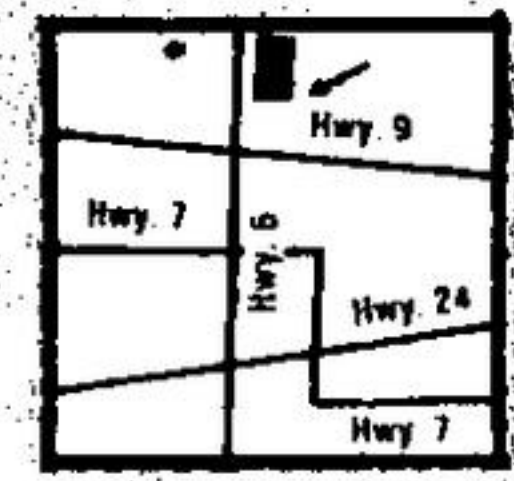
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