

Council votes on changes regarding Municipal Elections In-school immunization clinics offered to students born in 1999 or 2000

By: Dawn Brown

Halton Hills Town Council voted against Ranked Ballot voting, opting to maintain the existing first-past-the-post election model after a presentation from Clerk and Director of Legislative Services Suzanne Jones regarding revisions to the Municipal Elections Act (MEA) at the council meeting on December 12.

The Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016—Bill 181—was introduced in April 2016 and received Royal Assent in June of this year, and is described as the most “significant update to the MEA and the conduct of municipal elections in Ontario

within the last 20 years.” Amendments to the MEA affect a number of categories including: Election Advertising and Signs, Third Party Advertising, Accessibility Plan and Post-Election Reporting, Nomination Period and Process, Campaign Finances, Clerks Authority and Ranked Ballots.

In a ranked ballot election, voters rank candidates by order of preference, choosing first second and third options. The candidate who receives 50 per cent plus one or more of the votes wins. Should no one reach the threshold, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and those voters whose first choice was

eliminated would have their second choice distributed amongst the remaining totals, and so on until the threshold is met. Should council decide to use a ranked ballot system, a by-law would need to be passed no later than May 1 the year prior to the election year.

“If it’s not broke, don’t fix it,” said Councillor Ted Brown, regarding the ranked ballot system.

Mayor Rick Bonnette added, “I like to lead, I think this council likes to lead, but this is one we might want to take a back seat on the bus and let someone else drive it because I think this could be a lot of mass confusion.”

Starting now and running until mid-February, the Halton Region Health Department will be offering in-school immunization clinics for students born in 1999 and 2000 with incomplete immunizations who are at risk of school suspension. The clinics are being offered as part of Halton Region’s commitment to the health and well-being of its residents, since immunization is one way to keep children safe and healthy from the threat of preventable diseases.

The provincial Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) outlines which immunizations students must have in order to attend school. Local health departments are responsible for confirming the immunization records of students to ensure they have either the legally required immunizations or required exemption form on file.

This year, students born in 1999 and 2000 who have not provided this information to the Health Department by February 16, 2017, are at risk of suspension starting March 1, 2017. Families

with potentially impacted students received notices from the Health Department in July and are currently being notified in advance of the clinics at each high school.

“While the majority of families in Halton immunize their children, many are unaware that they need to notify the Halton Region Health Department about any immunizations their children have or do not have,” said Dr. Hamidah Meghani, Halton Region’s Medical Officer of Health. “In order to prevent suspension, we’re making it easier for students to get updated immunizations by holding clinics in their school and easy to report immunizations to the Health Department.”

Halton Region has made it easier to request an immunization record, receive immunizations and submit immunization records through an online photo immunization reporting system, accessed through both halton.ca/immunize and the new HaltonOne app available for users of Apple and Android devices. Families can also dial 311 or drop off a copy of their child’s immunization record to the Halton Region Health Department at 1151 Bronte Road in Oakville or any of the

Halton Region Health clinics in Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Georgetown and Acton.

To help promote the importance of reporting immunizations to the Health Department, Halton Region has also recently launched a short video which can be seen on the Region’s social media channels, as well as online at halton.ca/immunize.

For more information about ISPA and how immunization keeps children safe and healthy, please visit halton.ca/immunize.

The Regional Municipality of Halton serves more than 500,000 residents in the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, and the Town of Oakville. Halton Region is committed to meeting the needs of its residents through the delivery of cost-effective, quality programs and services, including water and wastewater; Regional roads and planning; paramedic services; waste management; public health; social assistance; children’s and seniors’ services; housing services; heritage programs; emergency management and economic development. For more information, dial 311 or visit Halton Region’s website at halton.ca

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
Luke 2:14

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