

## Old age ain't no place for sissies: A case study in Dementia

By Jane Dougan

"Old age ain't no place for sissies," Bette Davis declared. John (89) and Anne (85) represent possibilities and challenges for seniors today. Until 3 months ago, life was orderly. They kept their bodies and minds active; walking, socializing, keeping up with health checks. The usual complaints—high blood pressure, arthritis—but nothing unmanageable. Like many of their peers, they were living longer and healthier than their parents' generation.

A vacation south was cut short. Anne was telling people poolside that John had died or been kidnapped. Back home, John coped alone until Anne refused to stay in their 'evil' condo. They showed up at my door. After an agitated night, the next day in Emergency a sympa-

thetic doctor tentatively diagnosed Lewy Body dementia and prescribed medication to calm Anne. John refused sleep aids—Anne had started to wander. He needed overnight respite desperately but there was no room in Emergency or elsewhere. Cooking and laundry are difficult skills to learn at 89. John's still not sleeping regularly. He also totaled his car, no doubt due to exhaustion.

I've since learned that there is no respite or long-term care for dementia in Acton. What is available elsewhere is often booked months in advance. John has accepted the need to sell and go into long-term care. He wants to live with Anne or at least see her whenever she needs, but how or where, especially with little or no public transit? The wait list for subsidized long-

term care facilities in Halton is 2+ years. Even private care has wait lists months long, take what you can get. In-home support and day programs exist; e.g. Acclaim Health, the Alzheimer Society, the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) but demand is overwhelming. Anne's CCAC worker has 70+ clients. Much-appreciated Personal Support Workers (PSW's) now visit at scheduled times but these are stop-gaps on a long road ahead. Acclaim Health, Alzheimer Services' free online *Halton Dementia Guide for Caregivers* includes financial and legal considerations to consider early on, along with tips to avoid caregiver burnout. As Halton's population ages, the need for such awareness and conversations will become an increasing reality.

## Spotlight ISSUES FOR SENIORS

### Transportation and housing report card

By: Vivien Fleisher

Canadian society does reasonably well when it comes to seniors: of the top 25 countries to grow old in, we placed fifth largely because of our healthcare. It's also a good ranking when you consider that at the same time, we got a failing grade on transportation which was cited as a chronic problem. But even countries higher up the list than us like Sweden face problems lurking in the shadows. Simply put, people can fall through the cracks of even the most advanced societies. And with the current cohort of baby boomers entering their golden years, one major issue in Canada today is the same one that made many wealthy: housing.

In the GTA, the hot housing market is squeezing low-income residents out when landlords want to cash in on higher rents. According to a recent Trillium-funded report, 'Evictions of Senior Tenants in the GTA: A Call to Action to Curtail an Emerging Crisis', the skyrocketing cost of housing adds yet another layer of stress for the elderly, who often find themselves isolated at a time when they need support more than ever to navigate technology, finances, health issues, and unscrupulous landlords. A lack of senior-specific programming was mostly to blame, and what exists is difficult to find and access.

At the local level in Rockwood and Acton, improvements to affordability include easing bylaws for 'granny flats', and property tax deferrals and rebates for homeowners respectively. In Guelph-Eramosa Township, recent changes to the town's bylaws have allowed them to loosen the rules around accessory apartments, so older family members can live independently, yet be close to family and share resources. Mayor Chris White also says the concept of co-op housing for seniors is opening up possibilities for those not close to family, where several people can purchase a house together, and share kitchen facilities etc. Such arrangements get around the planning act because major changes to the home are not required.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette says the tax incentives the town implemented to keep seniors in their homes longer are an effort to keep residents who helped build the community continue to be a part of it, adding "I have heard from many seniors who have moved out of Halton Hills because they are on fixed incomes so they sell their homes to move up north. It is sad in cases where they have contributed to the town in so many ways and to see them just leave so this is a way that they can stay in their homes." He also says he's heard there is a lack of senior housing or

rental housing for seniors, as well as difficulties some have getting to Milton and other communities outside of Halton Hills. Halton Hills has long addressed local transportation issues through its 'ActiVan' program (serving disabled and senior citizens) which recently received a \$130,000 boost from the province at a critical time when its services were stretched thin, but Rockwood and surrounding communities have no such program in place. Guelph-Eramosa's Mayor White says "The cost of trying to run transit is prohibitive. We're well aware that transit is a huge issue, but we've got a population of 92,000 spread out over 2500 square miles." Instead, the town has concentrated on other aspects, like improved access to medical services. Rockwood was down to just one doctor a decade ago, but the expanded medical centre next to the senior's home has improved things vastly. Interest in the recently-expanded 55+ programming at Rockwood and the library has mushroomed, but getting there might be a problem for some. White says conversations with City of Guelph transit have come up empty thanks to low-population density, adding that Halton Hills has density and a transit system, while the rural nature of Guelph-Eramosa makes it impossible to fund.



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### NOTICE OF PESTICIDE USE

To identify mosquito larvae, the Halton Region Health Department monitors standing water and catch basins in urban areas on public lands in the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville. Where mosquito larvae are found, the Health Department uses larvicide (applied by licensed applicators) to reduce the incidence of West Nile virus in Halton.

#### Larviciding in standing water

Where monitoring indicates that mosquito larvae are present, larviciding of standing water may occur any time from May 1 to October 31, 2017. The Halton Region Health Department will apply larvicide to standing water sites under the direction of the Acting Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Daniela Kempkens. The biological larvicide VectoBac 200G (PCP# 18158, granular) or VectoBac 1200L (PCP# 21062, liquid) will be placed in affected standing water on public lands in urban areas in the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville. Signs will be posted at each location indicating when and where the larvicide is applied.

#### Larviciding in catch basins

Where monitoring indicates that mosquito larvae are present, larviciding of catch basins may begin any time from May 16 to October 31, 2017. The Halton Region Health Department will apply larvicide to catch basins under the direction of the Acting Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Daniela Kempkens. The larvicide Altosid Pellets (PCP# 21809, pellet) or Altosid XR Briquets (PCP# 27694, ingot) will be placed into catch basins in urban areas on public lands in the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville.

For the locations and dates of treatment, please visit our website at [halton.ca/wnv](http://halton.ca/wnv). For more information about West Nile virus, please contact Halton Region by dialing 311.

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**DINNER NIGHT OUT:** Spring was in the air at Bethel Church last Friday evening for a community Dinner Night Out despite the un-spring-like temperatures outside. Fifty-plus diners of all ages enjoyed a ham dinner with all the trimmings served by volunteers. An added surprise for dessert were "decorate-it-yourself" cookie packages. Next month's Dinner Night Out will be hosted by Knox Presbyterian Church on May 19. - Jane Dougan photo