

OUR VIEW

Fire safety is everyone's business

It is a sobering reality, but the days when firefighters could run into a burning building and rescue a child or family pet are all but in the past.

Today, if your house catches fire, you have to save yourself. This isn't because our firefighters are unskilled or unfit for the job. On the contrary, modern firefighters are arguably better-trained and equipped than ever before.

Largely thanks to cheaper products and building materials, modern structures burn at a much faster rate than their predecessors. The use of asbestos had many negative long-term health affects, but its absence from products such as insulation and ceiling tiles further reduces the time it takes for a small fire in one part of a house to engulf the entire structure. Highly flammable, paper-filled drywall has replaced slow-burning plaster, while couches, curtains and bedsheets made from synthetics like polyester also help the flames spread.

In light of this, it is tough to expect a fire truck to make it from the station to a burning home in time to rescue anyone inside - especially in some of the more rural areas of our communities. Oftentimes the best firefighters can do is contain the blaze to the one property and keep adjoining buildings intact.

This admittedly grim picture is not meant to scare us into never lighting a candle or using the stove. But we should understand the abilities and the limits of the modern fire service so that by taking precautions and being smart about fire safety, we can reduce and ultimately eliminate the chance that a fire will start and spread out of control.

The good news is that fire safety is a simple matter of planning ahead and making smart choices, starting with ensuring that your house has a working smoke alarm installed on every storey.

More than half of all fatal home fires happen at night while people are asleep. Smoke alarms are set off when a fire starts, alerting people before they are trapped or overcome by smoke. With smoke alarms, your risk of dying in a home fire is cut nearly in half. Install smoke alarms outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home, including the basement.

That is why it is so important to sit down with your family today and make a step-by-step plan for escaping from a fire. Draw a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of every room - especially sleeping areas. Discuss the escape routes with every member of your household. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year with a fire drill.

Thankfully, fires are rare, but the potential for tragedy remains, which is why all residents owe it to themselves and their loved ones to become educated about fire safety, ensure they have working smoke alarms, take time to plan an escape route and make sure their home is free of risk factors.

Taking the time to be prepared might just save your life.



Halton Hills shows its generosity, again

Thank you so much to the Independent Free Press for the article you ran about the Halton Learning Foundation's Back to School campaign. We had a great response to that article.

In seven short days, a miracle occurred in Halton Hills. The communities of Acton and Georgetown answered a call from the Halton Learning Foundation (HLF) that help was needed to financially support students in need in the Halton District School Board. Our Back to School goal was \$10,000.

A local business read the article in the IFP about our campaign and issued a challenge to other organizations to help. Further, this business offered to

match every dollar that arrived within seven days. Many wonderful people and companies stepped forward with a resounding "yes, we can" and together, raised \$5,175 for HLF ... more than half of our goal. How amazing!

School has now been in session for four weeks and - thanks to the generosity of so many in Acton and Georgetown - HLF has already helped 21 students in Halton Hills obtain the supplies they need for school, or the funds to participate in a field trip, purchase proper clothing or buy food.

There will be more students who will require help in the months to come and with this outpouring of generosity, HLF can continue saying "yes" to the requests that arrive daily from schools.

On behalf of HLF, I'd like to express our deep appreciation to the residents and businesses of Halton Hills. We are very grateful.

Lesley Mansfield,
Executive Director
Halton Learning Foundation

Singh makes history with win

Jagmeet Singh deserves a warm congratulation for making history in winning the NDP's leadership.

I hope he will follow the footsteps of late Jack Layton in standing up for the little guy whose voice is not loud enough. I hope he will demonstrate the courage to stand up high for justice and equality.

It makes me, as a member of a visible minority, proud to be a Canadian, a

country that gives everyone a fair share of equal rights, including the right to be heard and to hold a leadership position.

As Barack Obama did it in the U.S., I hope he will make history in Canada by becoming the first person of colour to be the next prime minister of Canada.

I wish him well and great success in this historical victory. As Obama said it, and we can also say the same thing in Canada: yes we can.

I really hope he will be successful in bringing people together at a time we live in when divisiveness has become the game of the day by many politicians.

We can certainly make Canada great again by working together to combat division, hatred and us verses them mentality.

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