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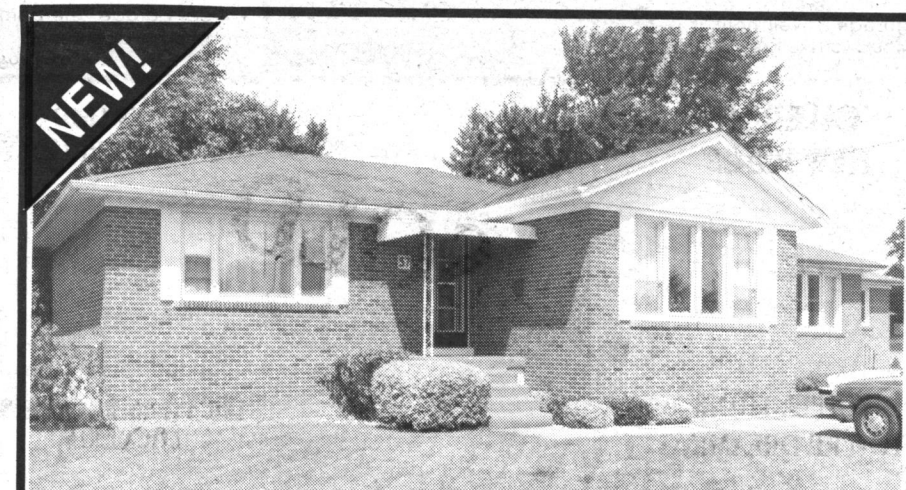


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Letters

Killing ourselves with apathy

Editor's note: The following letter was released to HHTW for publication.

**The Minister of Justice
Hon. Allan Rock
c/o Department
Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, Ont.
K1A 0H8**

Dear Minister,
Enclosed is my letter that was published in the local newspaper and one that I wrote to the Mayor of Georgetown and members of council, about the terrible toll cigarette smokers are enforcing on society.

I am one of thousands who are highly allergic to cigarette smoke, and yet, knowing all this, some of the council members were only lukewarm in their response to this grave problem. One even said, "There's no need to hurry on this," knowing full well that thousands of people here in Canada alone are dying horribly from their cigarette smoking habit, taking with them many innocent non-smokers.

The mayor and some members of council tried very hard to pass an even stiffer non-smoking bylaw, but were outvoted and decided in the end to designate only 25 per cent of floor space in restaurants as non-smoking areas, when it's 40 per cent elsewhere. Even 40 per cent is ill-suited for those people suffering from asthma, children suffering from seizures, and the many others who are highly allergic to cigarette smoke.

A non-smoking bylaw was passed to take effect next year, when smokers will have fewer places to smoke in Halton Hills, but as one councillor, Gerald

Rennie, said at a committee meeting, "I think the correct thing to do would be to ban smoking from all public places." He also brought to that meeting's attention that while the town ensures access to all public places for the physically disabled, it denies the responsibility to provide the same access to those who are allergic to cigarette smoke, or suffer from severe asthma. And yet, the cruel and inescapable fact is that cigarette smokers are physically disabling us by ruining our health and restraining us from having any sort of social life, something the rest of you takes for granted. I mean, how selfish can you get?

As I wrote in my letter to the mayor and members of council (and by the way, the mayor was very sympathetic and understanding - I wish they were all like him), there has been a new update by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency which reported, after more than 30 studies, that secondhand cigarette smoke is a human carcinogen in the same class as arsenic, asbestos, and benzene (found in lacquers, varnishes and dyes) and in the United States alone causes 3,000 lung cancer deaths a year in non-smokers. This report also says there has been an increase in childhood asthma, bronchitis, middle-ear infection and pneumonia, due to cigarette smoke.

This is all extremely serious, especially when hospitals are closing and there's not enough money for health care, and yet the government is still allowing cigarette smoke to cause such chronic illness (some

deadly) and suffering. The public should be made aware of this, because we're all at risk. They should also be made aware that in Canada, where approximately three million women smoke, lung cancer is fast approaching breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. That the previous government of Canada and the provincial governments have done nothing about this crime (for wicked crime it is) is an absolute travesty.

I believe any government in power that turns a blind eye to all this intolerable pain and suffering and the mortally ill, when they could pass a law to stop it, is as guilty as any criminal who unlawfully kills someone.

But it isn't unlawful for the tobacco industry to kill thousands of people, for the government has made it lawful. Where's the justice?

Why aren't we hearing outraged cries, an outpouring of intense and responsible concern for our fellow human beings facing such formidable adversity (including victims of crime)? There is only silence and a stagnant apathy.

You now have the power, minister, to do something about cigarette smoke and its devastating effect on smokers and non-smokers alike. It's a cruel and hideous wrong being allowed to injure today's society, because those in power haven't the will or the inclination to first combat and then defeat it. Neither has the public, until members of that public become victims themselves.

**Dee White,
Georgetown**

Regional spending must be cut

To the Editor:

The relative ease with which large amounts were sliced from our regional spending during the past year shows that we have been paying higher municipal taxes than necessary for years.

In the early 1950's I was hired by a federal government agency that was already overstaffed by professionals and quickly immersed in a training curse, which we called in the navy "how to swing the lead." I quit three months later.

I question whether the public gets value for many of our so-called services. I can show 18" diameter trees growing on market garden

land that once served the Toronto market. Do we need a forester to tell a farmer whether he can cut down a 6" tree?

Color coordination is a matter of personal taste. Do we need to employ a professional color coordinator for housing on the escarpment? After all, it was a professional who chose the green on the original regional building and I do not like that shade of green, do you?

The Credit Valley Conservation Authority was complaining about lack of funds to pay its real estate taxes. With the slowdown in building, there won't be nearly as much work to do. Has staff been reduced?

I suggest a committee of

citizens should be formed to examine our priorities, decide where we get value for our money and what can we afford.

Politicians and staff over the years become too close and objectivity is lost. Despite Mr. Turner's suggested federal deficit of only \$3 billion over budget for March, 1993, I feel the \$38 - \$40 billion deficit is more realistic.

With those figures, Mr. Chretien, unless he follows the Reform Party's policies and reduces spending, will have a financial crisis on his hands.

We may be increasing our exports. That is through technology not increased jobs. Labor is too expensive. At all levels of government taxes must be reduced before the economy will turn around.

Why wait for a crisis at the regional level before any action is taken.

Please, councillors, start now while people have time to make sensible, reasoned decisions.

**Rod Pinkney,
Georgetown**

Got a beef or a comment?

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request. Halton Hills This Week reserves the right to edit, revise, or reject any letters on the basis of factual errors, punctuation, spelling errors or as a result of space limitations.

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