

Taxes to increase with rural waste collection

By GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

At the request of Halton Hills Council, the Region of Halton has recently surveyed the residents of Glen Williams, Norval and Stewarttown about receiving waste collection. This new service would be paid for through a tax increase based on household assessment, and it is estimated that a house assessed at \$250,000 would pay an additional \$132.16 a year. If approved, collection services are expected to begin in these villages in February 2004.

Surveys were sent to these households in early April, and then open houses were held at the Halton Hills Civic Centre and in Glen Williams. According to David Miles, Supervisor, Waste Management Operations for Halton Region, people from only six households showed up at the Civic Centre, while 15 households were represented in Glen Williams.

A staff report on the results of the survey will be submitted to Council, and a decision will be made whether to start waste collection in these villages. The staff report will contain the number of surveys returned, the number in favour, opposed and undecided. What is not clear is what percentage constitutes a majority. If 16 out of 30 surveys are in favour of collection services, this may not reflect the desire of all residents for a tax increase. What if most people are content with their own waste disposal arrangements, and they didn't bother to return the survey?

"We could be hearing from a vocal minority," acknowledges Rick Bonnette, Regional Councillor for Halton Hills Wards 1 and 2, and chairman of the Halton Region Planning and Public Works Department. "But if people face a

tax increase and don't send a reply of no, it seems positive."

Bonnette notes that some candidates in previous municipal elections have been asked about rural waste collection by residents who say they get few services for their taxes. This being an election year, the survey may provide candidates with an answer to this question. It is worth pointing out that residents would have to pay extra taxes for this waste collection, which does not address the complaint of existing high taxes for few services.

Although there is no problem with the way village and rural residents currently dispose of waste, there is a problem with the six regional recycling depots. Bonnette says that there is a great deal of garbage being dumped at these sites. In fact 45 per cent of the recyclables collected are contaminated and unfit for recycling. If it is clear that these depots are not working properly, the obvious question is what are the alternatives? Bonnette says that there are a number of options. The use of security cameras to record licence plates of people seen dumping inappropriate materials has been suggested. An option that creates jobs is to fence the depots and staff them by personnel who ensure their proper use. Perhaps the depots should be closed, and the \$400,000 that it currently costs to operate them should be redirected to village and rural waste collection, eliminating or reducing a residential tax increase.

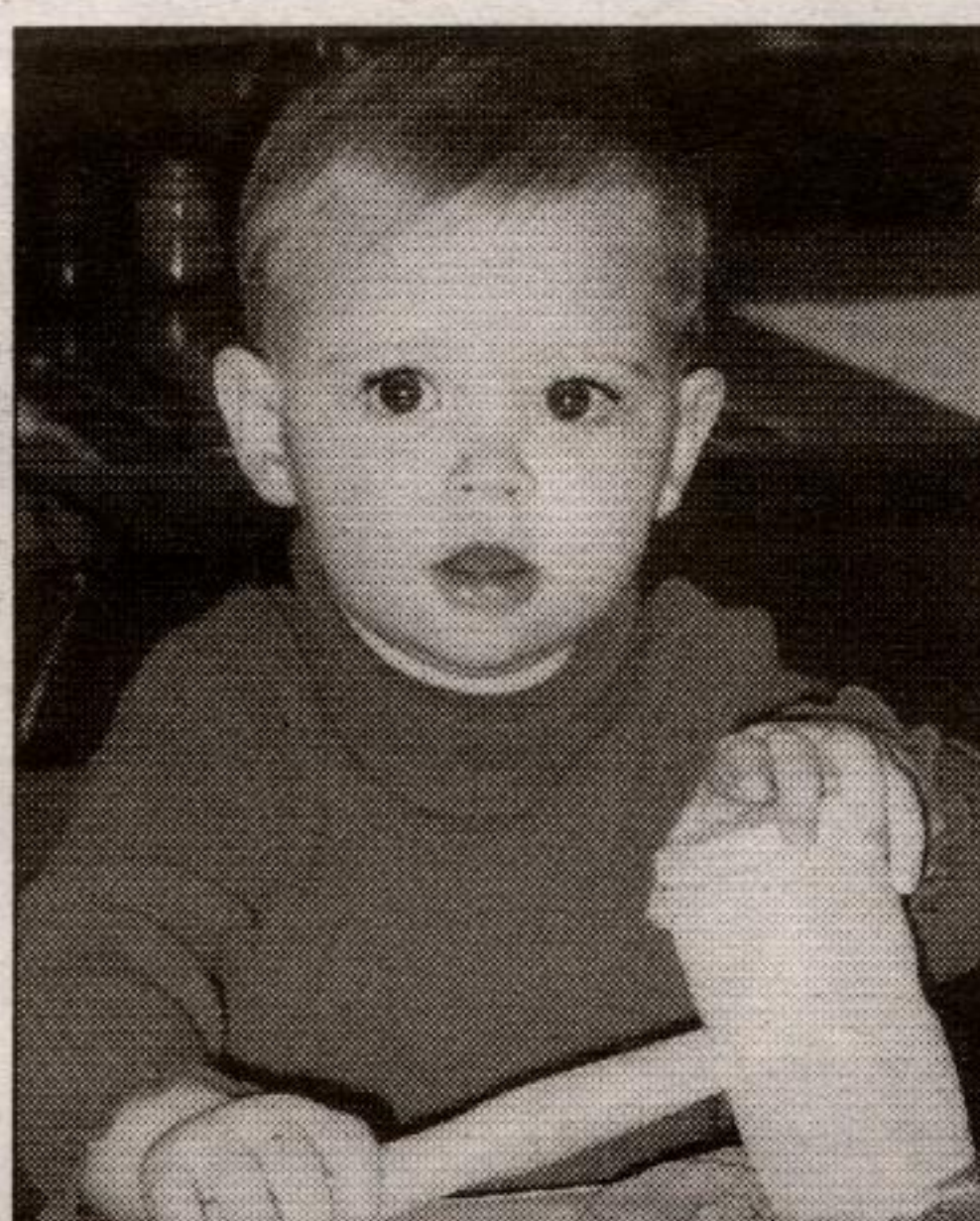
An effective alternative is Wastewise at 36 Armstrong Avenue in Georgetown. With no local or regional support of any kind, it has been completely self-supporting since 1994, diverting a total of 1035

tons of goods for reuse and more than 2343 tons of materials for recycling. It provides three full-time, two part-time and three summer jobs. It stands as an example for citizens from other communities who wish to emulate its success. Yet the Region and the Town appear to have no interest in replicating this model.

Instead, the Town seems keen to raise taxes and provide waste collection for the villages first and the rural areas soon after. Bonnette shares the fact that regional staff will be asked next to explore prices for waste and Blue Box collection in the rural parts of Halton Hills, Milton and Burlington. A subsequent survey is planned for rural residents.

If taxes increase because of waste collection, there is no longer a financial incentive for rural and village residents to reduce waste. When paying to dispose of waste by the bag, thrifty people are rewarded for reducing waste at the point of purchase, recycling as much as possible and delivering reusable goods to second-hand outlets. They may not be motivated to continue if they have to pay as much as people who make no effort to divert waste.

Bonnette hopes that residents will practice proper waste management by recycling the items accepted by the Blue Box program, composting and other activities that will extend the life of Halton's landfill site. He notes that the site in Milton, which cost \$100 million to create, has an estimated 30 to 40 years left because of waste diversion. Bonnette says that Council will wait for the staff report on the survey. "I'm not going to support something people don't want," he says. "We're not out to do anything devious."



If I had a hammer...

Ontario Early Years Centre (North Halton) celebrated its first anniversary on Thursday, April 25 with an open house. On hand to enjoy the festivities was 20-month-old Madison Buchanan, who enjoyed one of the many crafts available.

PHOTO BY DONNA DANIELLI

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"THE DAWN OF THE DREAM"

Milton Council chokes on smoking bylaw

Continued from page 3

Councillor John Challinor, allowing DSRs. Opposing the by-law were Councillors Wally Hunter, Ken Keates, Barry Lee and Rick Malboeuf. Councillor Cindy Lunau refrained from voting. The approved by-law allows for DSRs in Milton's bars and restaurants, bingo halls and horse-racing facilities. DSRs require a separate ventilation system that maintains a min-

imum ventilation of 30 litres a second per person that is vented directly to the exterior of the building. A DSR may represent up to 40 per cent of the total seating of an establishment, and all proprietors who wish to construct a DSR will be required to enter into a contract with the Town of Milton that assures their compliance with the regulation. This contract also guar-

antees them five years of continual use that will run no later than January 1, 2009. Should the Town adopt or amend the smoking by-law to require a 100% smoke free environment, DSR agreements with the Town will remain in force until they expire. At the present time, six establishments in Milton have indicated an interest in building a Designated Smoking Room.

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