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~ SURVEYING THE REGION ~

# The North Halton Compass

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VOLUME 6, ISSUE 10

NOVEMBER 01, 2003

## OMB set for overhaul

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

The time may be right for changes to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), the body that decides appeals on municipal matters. The new Liberal government made a campaign promise to revise the OMB's rules, some local politicians are in favour, and the David Suzuki Foundation recently published a report urging all levels of government to end urban sprawl.

Many in Halton have mixed feelings about the OMB. The Region, towns, staff and citizens report different experiences. At the regional level, the success rate at OMB hearings has been excellent. Since 1998, there have been only five appeals concerning the Halton Urban Structure Plan, and all have been decided in the Region's favour. Regarding minor hearings involving severances, the Region's success rate has been at least 85 per cent.

Milton staff report very few OMB hearings, perhaps only six, in the last five years. Statistics have not been gathered, as dealings have been fortunate. Yet Las Polcz, a candidate for Milton mayor, notes "The OMB has not been viewed

favourably by most folks of this town, at least those that I know, for its reputation of partisanship for developers and to the detriment of those with a conscience about this community. I have often heard folks refer to it as a biased monster." Polcz suggests that issues go unchallenged for fear of cost and due to the feeling that land speculators and developers tend to win.

In Halton Hills, Mayor Kathy Gastle acknowledges that it is very time-consuming and costly to go to the OMB, and that negotiating outside is better. Mayoral candidate John Day notes that the Town has both won and lost at the OMB. "In recent years," he adds, "residents have been cynical of development applications and Council's ability to deal with them in view of the Board's track record of favouring development interests."

Candidate for Mayor Rick Bonnette says that the OMB "has been a governing body which has always hung over our heads. It was always a threat to our decision making. Whatever the local government decided, we knew that the proposal was going to go to the OMB, and

chances were that it would be approved, contrary to the wishes of the local council representing the public."

The public is often mystified by the OMB. Robert Torkelson sent a letter to *The Compass* with many questions he has about the board. "Like most people in Halton," he wrote, "I know nothing much about the OMB and have been waiting for years for someone to provide a Halton Hills-based explanation. You would be doing us a service by explaining it all."

The OMB publishes information on its Web site, www.omb.gov.on.ca. Defined as "an independent adjudicative tribunal which hears appeals on a wide range of municipal and land-related matters," the OMB considers Official Plans, zoning by-laws, subdivision plans, variances, land compensation, development charges, boundaries and aggregate resources.

It has a long history, going back to 1897 for its creation and being renamed the OMB in 1932. Most of the powers given it back

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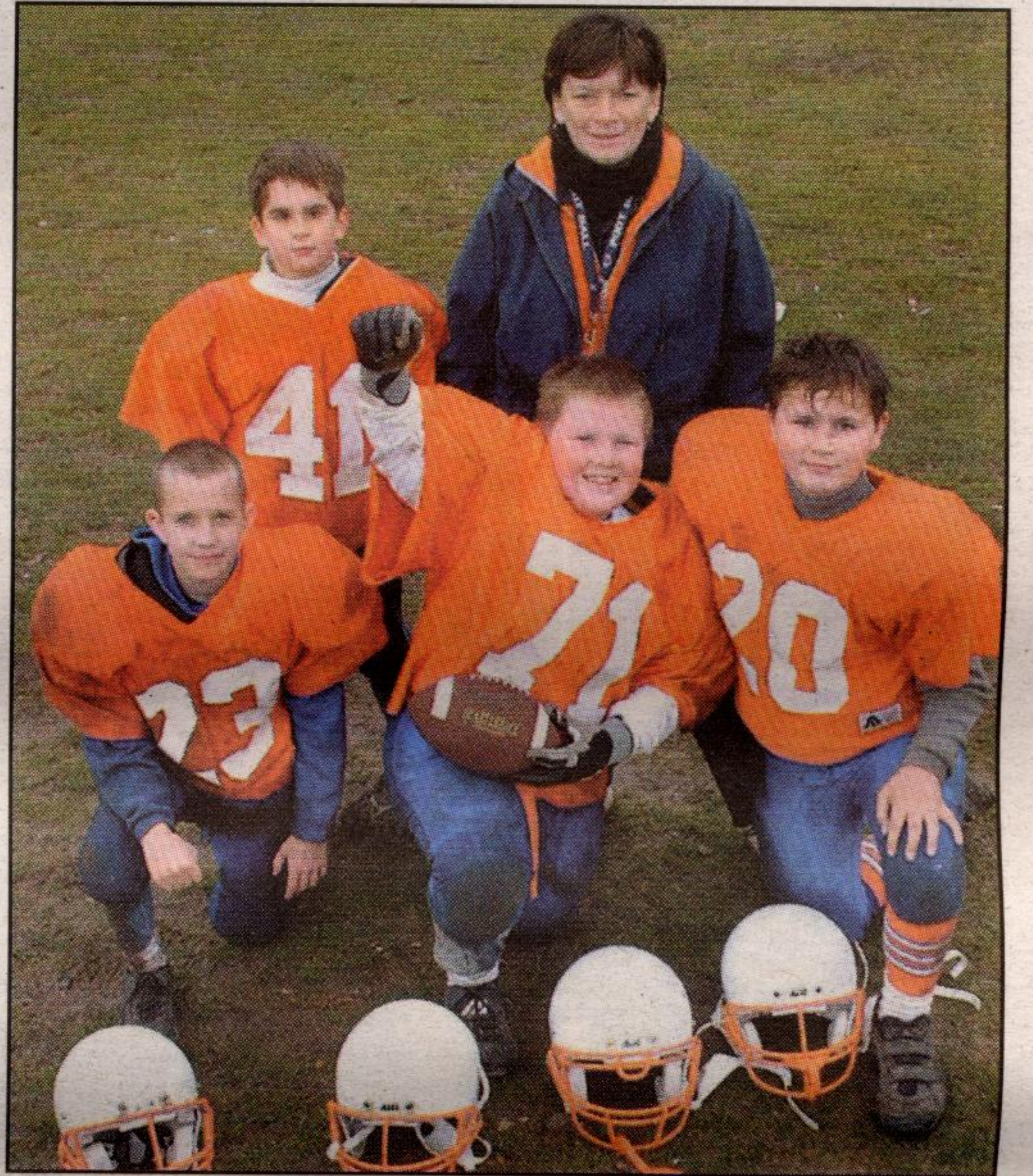


PHOTO BY REID KENNEDY

### Bear Power!

Pictured with head coach Pam Dunk are the rural members of the Guelph Bears Tykes football team: Joe Aitken, #23 and Spencer Dorhan, #41 of Rockwood; George Kennedy, #71 of Eden Mills and Mark Gilmour, #20 of Puslinch.

### Inside The Compass



#### HOMEWORKS

Jack Manchisi of J&D Tire proves that a business exterior need not be boring. His unique gardens of rocks and botanicals highlight his tire service on Main Street, Milton.

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#### IDLE PURSUITS

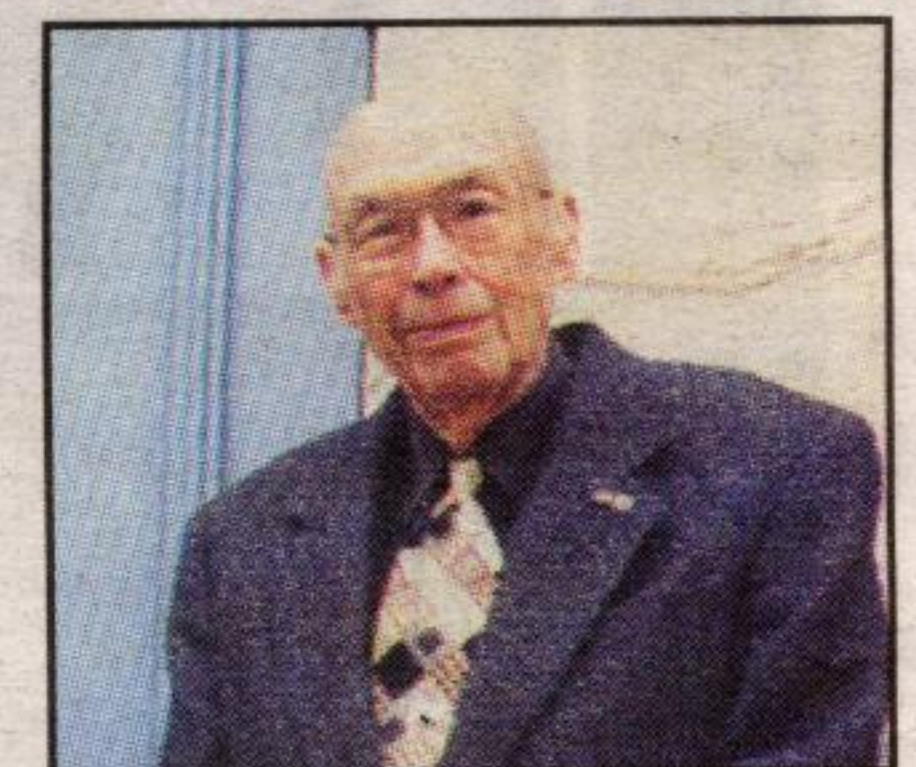
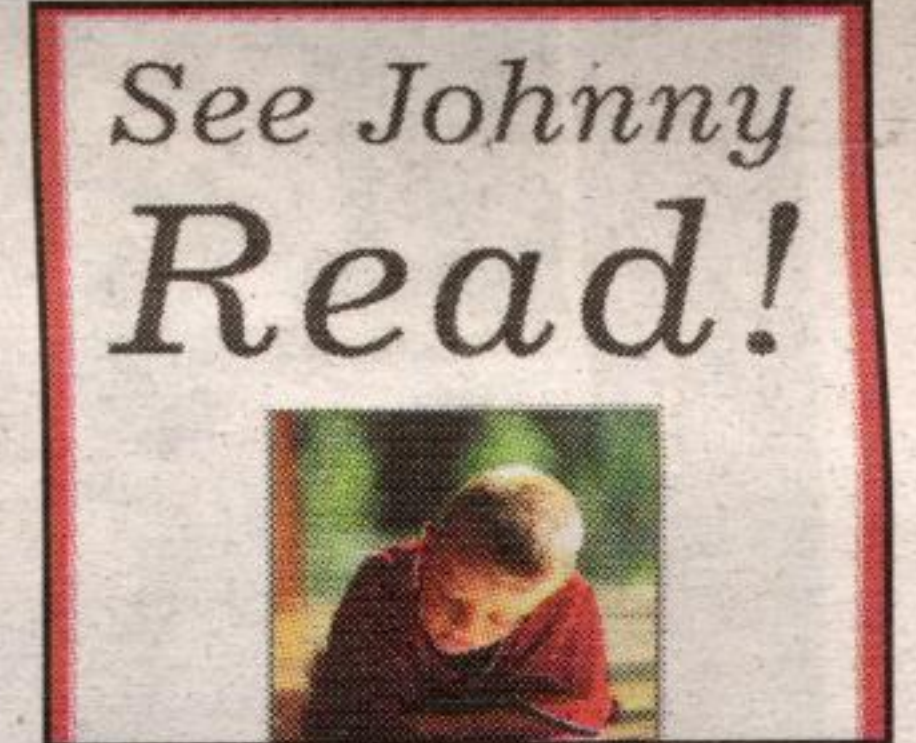
See Johnny Read puts educational information gleaned from Wood's 18 years helping struggling children as a reading consultant and popular speaker on learning disabilities, into simple step by step, practical terms.

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#### COMMUNITY CORNERSTONE

With his near perfect recollection of events and people long past, former Milton Mayor Mike Ledwith is a fount of information concerning the town.

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