

# Calls for changes to OMB

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then have been retained and many more powers have been added by legislation. The OMB has jurisdiction from at least 180 statutes, although most work focuses on the Planning Act.

The OMB consists of a chair, vice-chairs and members, all appointed by the provincial government through the Lieutenant Governor, for a three-year term. Members are such professionals as lawyers, planners, engineers, municipal elected representatives and administrators, accountants, economists, teachers, professors and farmers. At the end of 2001, there were 31 full-time board members. In this year, more than 2800 hearings were held.

The OMB claims it "listens to the appeals and concerns of people, public bodies or corporations who object to the decisions of public or approval authorities such as local or regional councils, committees of adjustment, land division committees, the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, or an expropriating authority."

Hearings are held throughout Ontario but the head office must be in Toronto. The OMB warns that hearings can be expensive, due to lawyers' fees and preparation time for expert witnesses.

There seems to be agreement about the future of the OMB. Regional Chair Joyce Savoline sums up the opinions of many when she states "There is no question the OMB must be reformed and refocused. In its current form it is costly, which deters the ordinary citizen from being involved. The cost, usually millions, is also onerous on municipalities. A restructured OMB should offer a formal, yet inclusive environment that is a level playing field for all parties. The OMB should be a vehicle of last resort, and sadly, it has ceased to be this. It has become part of the planning process by allowing a 90-day referral."

Unlike Mr. Bonnette, who would like to see the OMB abolished, Mayor Gastle agrees with Chair Savoline, who warns "Without a properly restructured OMB, development issues would be headed straight for the courts. Once in the court system, the issues would no longer be based on good planning but rather on rights and responsibilities. The process would be even more costly and the public interest would be excluded."

Coinciding with the Liberal government's promise to reform the OMB is a new report from the David Suzuki Foundation, which is calling for a radical rethinking of planning and development, to arrest urbanization of the GTA. "The more cities sprawl outward," says David Suzuki, world renowned scientist and broadcaster, "the more we damage the environment and our health. We need to design communities so that the people who live in them use their cars less and have a much lower impact on the environment, and a better quality of life in return."

The report *Driven to Action: Stopping Sprawl in Your Community* states that the population of the Toronto area grew 7.6 per cent between 1996 and 2001. "The rate at which land was urbanized in these regions was even greater, sometimes double or more the population growth rate," the report continues. "This difference between the growth rates of people and of the land they occupy defines urban sprawl. As cities spread into vast low-density urban areas, sprawl evolves into a drain on ecological, social and economic capital."

The number one point that the Suzuki Foundation calls for is to protect agricultural and rural areas by establishing a legislated urban growth boundary. Other recommendations are increasing funding for public transit, intensifying town centres by mixed use, and creating more compact cities.

These are echoed in the Smart Growth Report, the work of a committee chaired by Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion. Mayor McCallion admits that mistakes were made in the growth of Mississauga, and advises north Halton to grow wisely. "I support the Liberal government's plan to limit the power of the OMB," she adds. "Not eliminate it, but revise it. The government should legislate the Smart Growth Report's policies, not make them guidelines, and direct the OMB to follow Smart Growth policies."



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## North Halton Happenings

### November 1

• **St. Paul's Fair in Angel Square**, 123 Main Street, Milton, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. There's something for everyone: a bake table, artisans and vendors. Please call 905-878-8895.

• **Halton Regional Police Auction**, Halton Regional Police Service Headquarters, 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville. The auction of bicycles and unclaimed property begins at 9:30 a.m. with viewing starting at 8:30 a.m.

### November 2

• **Milton's Book Festival for Children - A Celebration of Children's Literature** held at Milton District High School from noon until 4 p.m. For additional festival information call 905-875-4636 or www.milton.ca

### November 3

• **Grant Focus Seminar for Visual Artists** led by Ontario Arts Council Visual Arts Officer Carolyn Vesely. Guelph Arts Council meeting room, 147 Wyndham Street North, Suite 404, Guelph. Advance registration is required. Call 519-856-3280 or gac@sentex.net

### November 4

• **CFUW Georgetown's Fall Dinner**, North Halton Golf and Country Club, Cocktails at 6:00 p.m. and Dinner at 7:00 p.m. The guest speaker for the evening will be Dan Needles, beloved Ontario playwright, best known for his *Letters from Wingfield Farm*.

### November 5

• Members of the public are invited to attend a free seminar entitled *Diabetes. An Ounce of Prevention . . . Can Reduce your Risk* at Sheridan College, Oakville. For information con-

tact Canadian Diabetes Association at 905-528-3111 ext. 230 or Halton Healthcare Services 905-338-4147.

### November 6

• The Georgetown Little Theatre is holding their opening night as a benefit performance for the Old Seed House Garden. A wine and cheese reception will accompany the comedy *Cookin' With Gus*, John Elliot Theatre, 9 Church Street, Georgetown. Call the box office at 905-877-3700. Play runs November 6-8 and November 12-15.

• **CFUW Milton & District meeting** at Hugh Foster Hall. Regular meeting at 7:30 pm. Public invited for 8:20 p.m. Barbara Walker, author of "Dancing Devil: My 20 Years with Albert Walker" will be the guest speaker. For information call 905-878-2124 or 905-876-4524.

• **Halton Healthcare Services - Milton District Hospital** invites you to attend a *free Breast Health Workshop*, Upstairs at Loblaws, 75 Nipissing Rd, Milton from 7:00 p.m. -8:30 p.m. To reserve a seat, please call 905-338-4379.

### November 8

• **Boston Presbyterian Church's Country Christmas Bazaar**, Third Line Esquesing (north of 5 Sideroad), 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Baking, jams, crafts, sewing, Christmas decoration and a silent auction including a handmade quilt. Hot soup and chili lunch.

• **Buffet Roast Beef Dinner** at Ebenezer Church, 12274 Guelph Line north of Brookville. For tickets/reservations call the church office at 905-854-2423, Audrey at 519-824-3770 or Margaret at 519-853-0918.

• **Christmas In The Country Bazaar** at

the Carlisle United Church, 1432 Centre Road, Carlisle, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Knitting, crocheting, crafts, Christmas decorations, fruit-cakes, puddings, mincemeat, tarts, and pies. Gourmet deli, consignment vendors, silent auction, white elephant and quilt draw. Coffee and muffins in the morning prior to lunch at noon.

### November 12

• Join the *Esquesing Historical Society* as they explore lodgings of Georgetown as a selection of speakers share their research and stories on who had good stables, where the rooms were and who had the best beer. Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown at 7:30 p.m.

### November 14

• **Milton Concert Presentations' Milton's 3rd Night at the Proms** with Kerry Stratton and the Toronto Philharmonia at St. Paul's United Church, 123 Main Street, Milton, 8:00 p.m. For information, call 905-878-4732.

• The Eden Mills Friendly Seniors host *Euchre* at the Eden Mills Community Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$5 per person. Prizes and Refreshments; all welcome.

### November 15

• **Parents Without Partners**, Chapter 204 proudly presents *Mario & The Magic Coat*, Milton Seniors Activity Centre at 2:00 p.m. Please call the information center at 1-800-419-7383 to order your tickets today.

### November 16

• **Rad Rally Community Youth Service**, 7:00 p.m. at Acton Salvation Army Church, 114 Mill St. E. Acton. This service is geared to teens and twenties age group but all ages are welcome.

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