

# Hold the salt

## Region plans to reduce use on area roads

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

Halton Region is aiming to be among the leaders in Canada for a strong commitment to environmental stewardship because of its new Salt Management Plan. Halton joins Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Region of Niagara, Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba in taking this initiative.

The new plan aims to reduce the amount of road salt used while maintaining the current standards for safety. Best salt management practices and proven technology will be used in the most effective way possible. New technologies and chemicals will be sought to reduce negative environmental impacts even further.

In 2001, Environment Canada declared road salt to be a detriment, specifically to soil, groundwater, rivers, streams, vegetation, fish and wildlife - but not harmful to humans. Environment Canada encouraged municipal users of road salt to form their own management plans.

Areas of concern include the amount of salt used, uncontrolled releases of stored salt, the amounts of contaminants in disposed snow, and the use of salt in sensitive areas. The Region hired Ecoplans Ltd. to help develop a plan for roads in Halton. Improvements are

planned in spreader equipment, weather forecasting, salt and sand storage, snow disposal, training and decision making. These changes and practices are intended to minimize the amount of salt entering the environment.

New spreader trucks will have pre-wetting units that will spray a salty brine. Ironically, in freezing rain conditions, salt sticks to the road better when it's sprinkled as a solution. This reduces the amount of salt used, and hard salt will no longer bounce onto the side of the road.

Other new techniques include record-keeping systems to track salt use, and two Advanced Road Weather Information Systems that are to be installed within three years.

Costs for the changes will initially be high: \$900,000 in capital costs over five years, and \$35,000 in annual operating costs.

These items will be proposed for the Region's 2004 budget. Each municipality will have costs in addition to these. Escarpment areas tend to be more expensive to service. There are, however, expected to be annual savings due to improved efficiencies and the reduction of the amount of salt used. The Salt Management Plan lets the Region and the Towns phase in components as budgets allow.



PHOTO BY REID KENNEDY

Region of Halton Road Supervisor John Stervoski, left, and Halton Hills Public Works Supervisor Keith Smiley discuss new techniques in the spreading of road salt.



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We heard your concerns about quality of life.

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Joyce Savoline  
Chairman, Halton Region  
[www.region.halton.on.ca](http://www.region.halton.on.ca)

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