

Falling through the cracks

A personal view of the health system

By JERRY FORD

The communities in Halton Region are wonderful places to live, vigorous and full of all the amenities that allow its residents to enjoy the highest quality of life that Canada has to offer. Unless, of course, someone is unfortunate enough to fit outside the definition of "normal" and fall through one of the many cracks in our healthcare system.

In Halton Region we have strong and vital programs to care for our frail seniors, although the supply does need to be expanded to accommodate the aging of our population.

As a result of a major error by Queen's Park in interpreting needs across the province, every municipality has an oversupply of long term care beds, commonly referred to as nursing homes.

WHERE DO PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF SIXTY-FIVE, DISABLED BY DISEASE TO THE POINT WHERE THEY CANNOT LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, FIND A PLACE TO LIVE?

Most of today's seniors who can no longer live safely on their own are certainly not ready for a nursing home, and Halton has a very effective Supportive Housing program in place for them.

"Supportive Housing is designed for people who only need minimal to moderate care - such as homemaking or personal care and support - to live independently. Accommodations usually consist of rental units within an apartment building. In a few cases, the accommodation is a small group residence," according to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care definition Services for severely disabled children are as good as anywhere in Ontario, and will benefit from the newly announced government funding for new 'special care facilities', another name for group homes.

What about those disabled children, where do they live when they grow up?

There are many diseases that create disability in adults including ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), Arthritis, Fibromyalgia, Guillain Barre Syndrome, brain tumours, Lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Parkinson's Disease, Poliomyelitis, and stroke.

Where do people under the age of sixty-five, disabled by disease to the point where they cannot live independently, find a place to live?

Medical advances have been so effective at saving lives, putting shattered bodies back together, that the supply of organs for transplant has virtually disappeared. Rarely are these repaired bodies the same as before the accident.

As a result we have people, often young adults, with acquired brain injury or spinal chord injuries in our community who cannot live independently, where do they live?

In Halton Region there are only two places that provide Supportive Housing to the disabled children who are now adults, the under sixty-five population who are stricken by disease, and the unfortunate accident victims.

Caine Apartments in Oakville offers twenty-four units of Supportive Housing and Palmer House in Burlington has a dozen dedicated units. The supply has not changed in well over a decade, but the demand has soared because the Region is growing rapidly, improvements in care are helping people live longer and advances in medical science are saving lives that a decade ago would have been lost.

The March of Dimes manages the Oakville facility. The waiting list is two to five years and, according to a staff member, the annual demand for spaces is "incredible".

Palmer House is just one of several locations from Mississauga to Hamilton managed by Participation House. The total waiting list is about 265, according to Executive Director Cindy Kinnon. That translates to an unsatisfied demand that is almost five times the number of beds in use.

Since Halton cannot meet the needs of its citizens what do people do? They either remain where they are, living a severely restricted and increasingly isolated life, or go elsewhere.

In the past the Ontario government has sent brain injury patients to special care facilities in the U.S. rather than invest in developing an appropriate program here.

Moving from your community, family and friends is a traumatic event under the best of conditions. Being forced to relocate simply to get decent housing just aggravates the already high stress levels of the people involved.

The present situation does not come close to meeting the needs of our citizens. It robs a person of the support of family and friends at a time when the need is greatest, and delivers a subtle message that people with special needs are not welcome in their own community.

This is a very personal issue, and everyone needs to consider it on the basis of "What if it was my child, my parent, ...or me?" Perhaps it is time that we, as a community, did the right thing for our families, friends and neighbours.

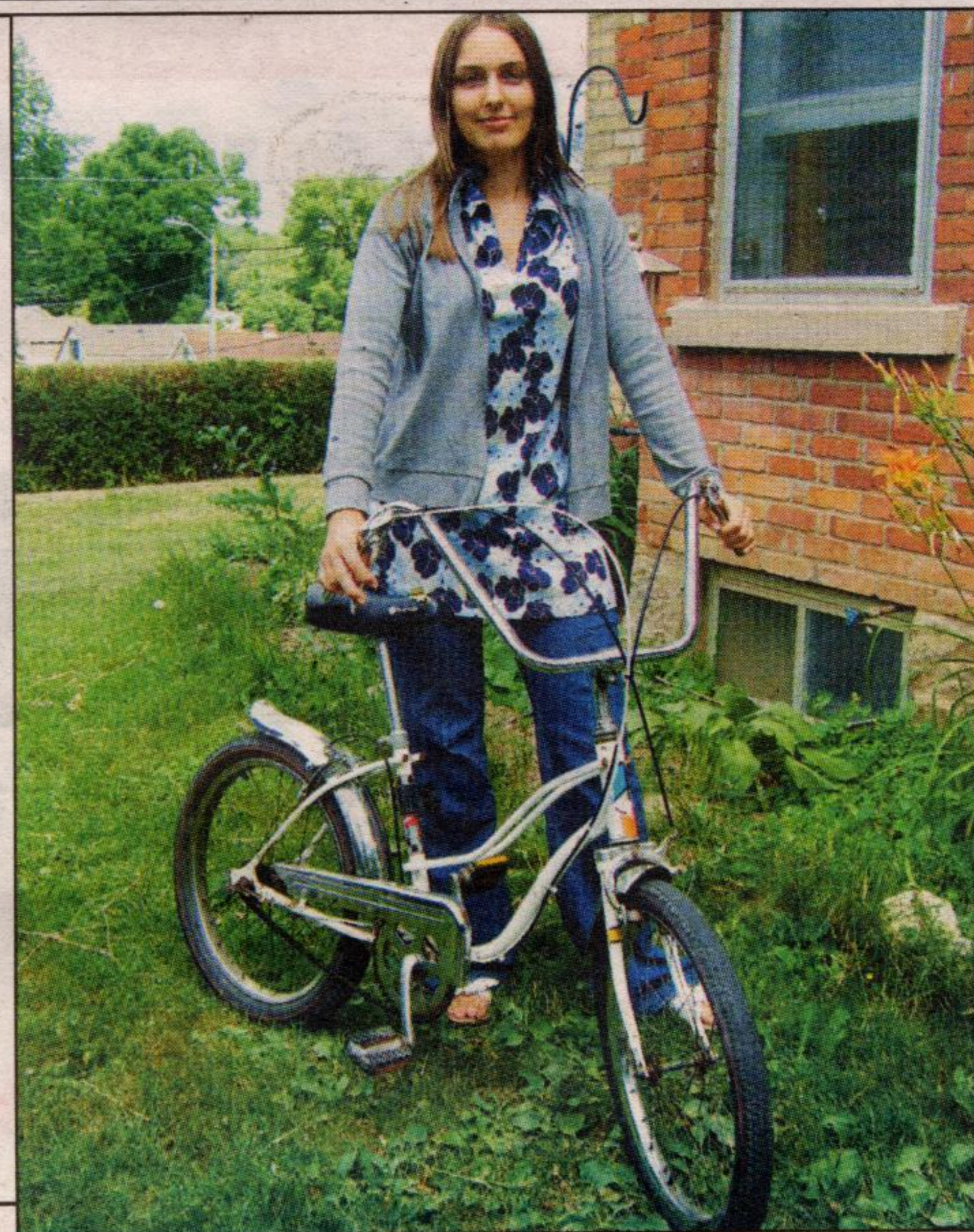
Dude, where's my bike?

By DONNA DANIELI

Halton Compass reporter Ann Kornuta was elated to welcome her beloved 1978 white low-rider cruiser bicycle back after it was stolen from her yard in Milton.

Flyers plastered around town the following day had immediate results. An enterprising group of 12-year-old boys spotted the thief on the stolen bike and discreetly tailed him. The frightened thief abandoned the bike in the creek behind Mill Pond. It was triumphantly recovered and returned to Ann by the three 12-year-olds, who then refused a reward or to be identified as the heroes they are.

The Compass would like to congratulate these young men for their quick thinking, compassionate act.



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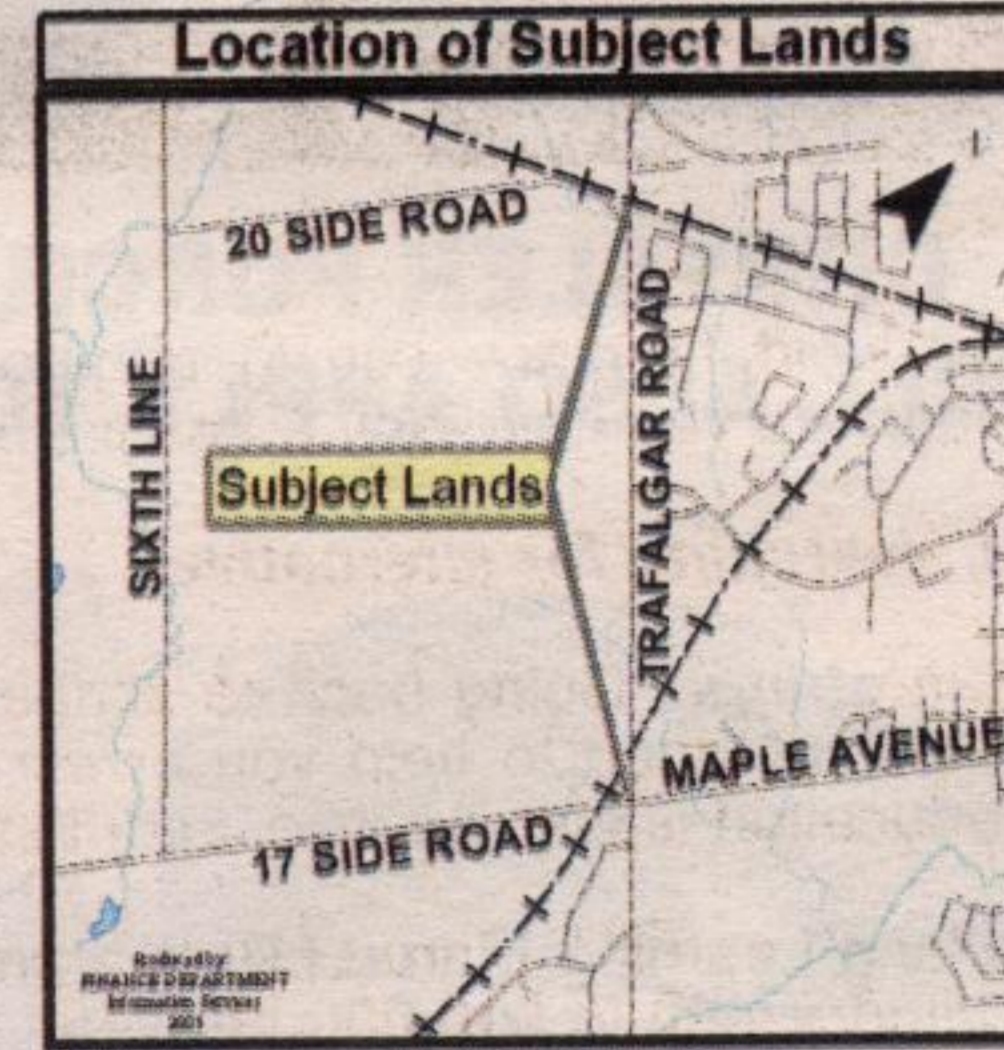
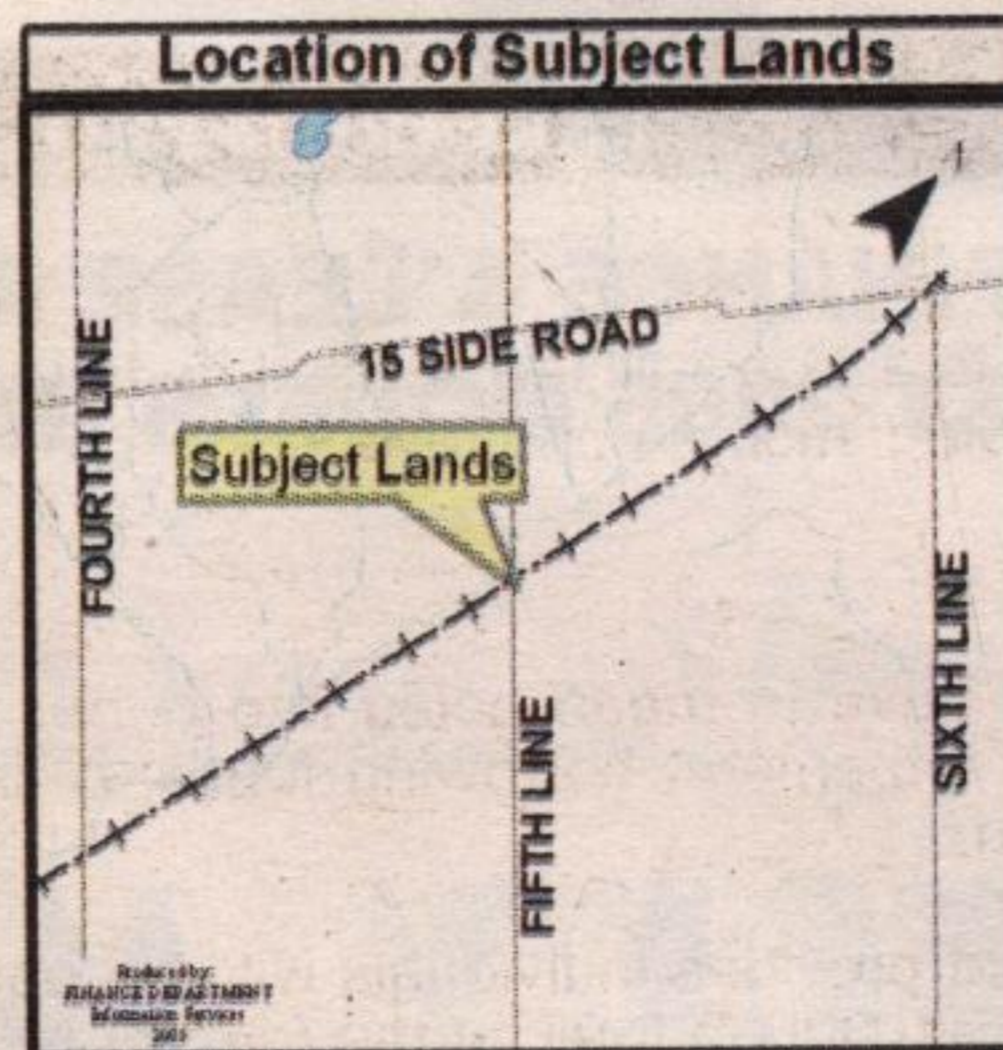


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Railway Crossing Maintenance Work Halton Hills

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, and the Town of Halton Hills By-law 2003-0032 regarding the following temporary road closure for maintenance purposes.

The following road closures will take place for maintenance on railway crossings:
Fifth Line south of 15 Side Road will be closed at the railway crossing on Monday July 25 and Tuesday July 26. 17 Side Road west of Trafalgar Road will be closed at the railway crossing on Wednesday July 27 and Thursday July 28. Trafalgar Road will be closed north of 17 Side Road at the railway crossing on Tuesday August 2 and Wednesday August 3.



Inquiries on the details of the maintenance work should be directed to Mr. Dick Spear, Senior Supervisor, Public Works at the Town of Halton Hills extension 2612.

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