

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Prosperous Halton

One of the most interesting documents to come across the editorial desk in some time is from Halton Region. It's called Invitation for Investment and is a community profile of Halton providing demographic information and statistical data about the Region and its four municipalities, Halton Hills, Milton, Oakville and Burlington.

It comes in five separate booklets on economic activity, population and labour force, infrastructure, census data, lifestyle and housing along with a map brochure. Some of the statistics are enlightening.

Although aimed at business the statistics show a profile of a region rich in industry and with a growing population that is straining its boundaries.

Burlington, of course, with nearly 20,000 people employed in 501 establishments, leads the region followed closely by rural Oakville with 447 establishments and 17,444 employees. Milton comes next with 166 establishments and 5,061 employees. Halton Hills brings up the rear with 104 manufacturing industries and 3,646 employees.

Machine manufacturing with 794 employees is the largest employer in Halton Hills followed by plastics and rubber products at 529, computer and electronic manufacturing (479), chemical manufacturing (351) transportation equipment manufacture (261) food manufacturing (148), furniture and related products (123), and leather and allied product manufacturing (110) and a number of other employers with less than 100 employees.

There are 43 unions active in Halton Region with 269 agreements representing 46,671 employees with the Canadian Auto Workers by far the largest with 16,862 members. Halton Board of Education has the largest number of public sector employees in Halton with 4,700 followed by the Catholic school board with 1,720 and Halton Police with 1,550.

One of the interesting statistics is the difference between the number of Town employees in Milton, 300, as compared to Halton Hills with 142, although Halton Hills has a population 10,000 more than its neighbour, 42,390 as opposed to 32,104 in Milton (1996 Statistics Canada).

Halton's total population was 339,875 in 1996 with Burlington the largest at 136,976 with Oakville at 128,405 following close. Over 84 per cent of Halton's population consider English to be their mother tongue, or 280,795 people, considerably more than the Ontario average of 72 per cent. Over 6,000 name French as the mother tongue followed by Italian at 5,630, and German at 5,045. The top six source countries for immigrants to Halton during the years 1991-96 were the United Kingdom, Poland, the US, India, Philippines and South Africa.

There is so much information these profiles we couldn't possibly squeeze it all into this space. Some of the other interesting statistics include:

Halton has over 150 houses of worship, 75 of them Protestant, over 22 Catholic and more than 50 other denominations.

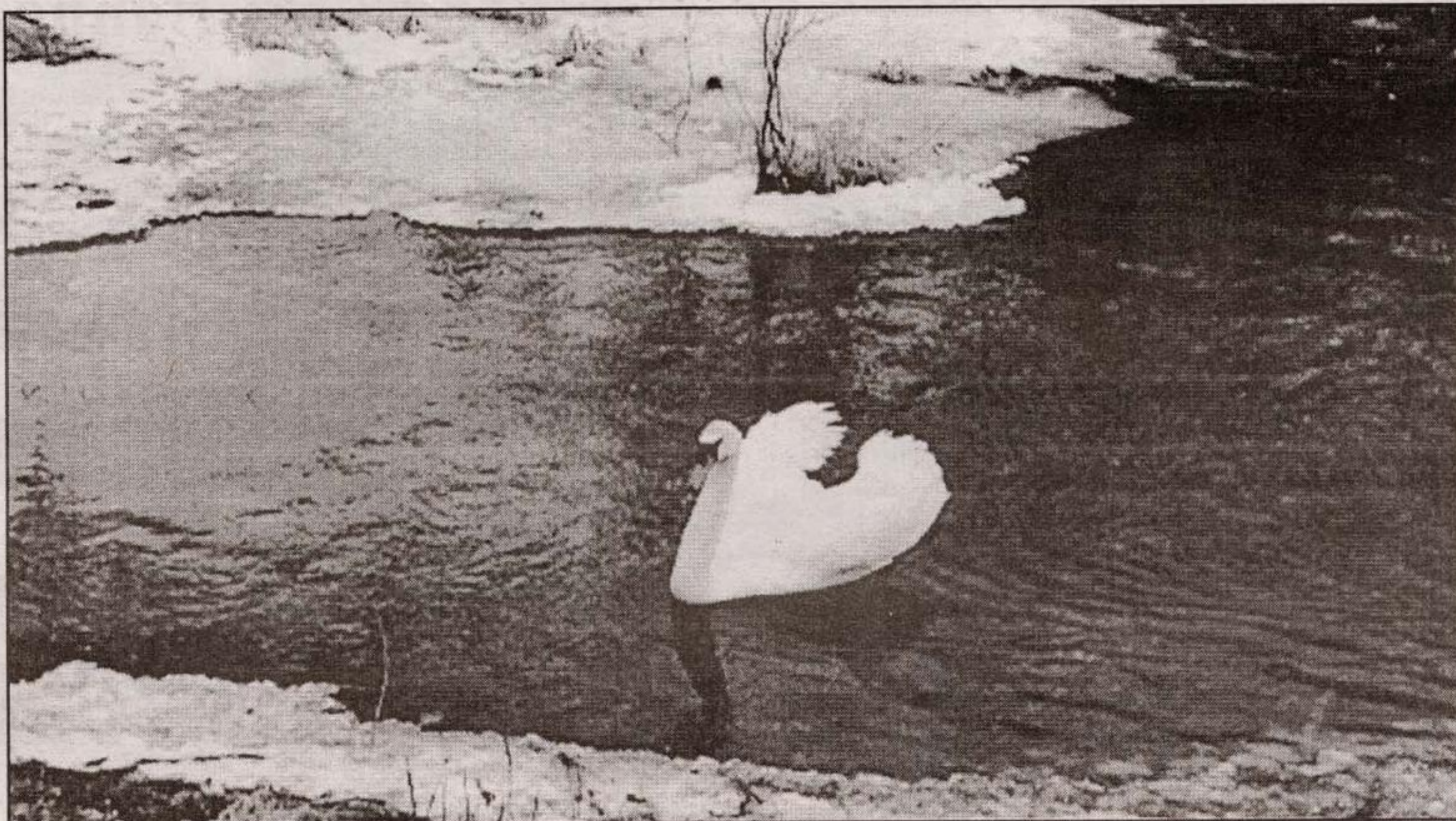
There are 13 public libraries, 11 community newspapers including The New Tanner, four hospitals and once community college.

Housing prices for detached bungalows from April to June 1998, were highest in Oakville at \$205,000 with Halton Hills and Milton next at \$185,000 and Burlington lowest at \$174,000. On the other hand executive houses in Oakville averaged \$490,000 to \$350,000 in Burlington. Halton Hills and Milton were \$282,000 and \$265,000 respectively. Over 64 per cent of Halton's dwellings are single detached as compared to 56 per cent in Ontario.

Industrial land in Halton varies in price from as low as \$70,000 an acre and up.

Burlington and Oakville get their water from Lake Ontario, Halton Hills and Milton from wells and reservoirs.

All these statistics generally show Halton to be one of the most prosperous and wealthy areas of Ontario.



**CHOW TIME:** The ice on Fairy Lake and its environs is starting to break up and makes a handy place for this swan to forage for food. This photo was taken by Jim Graham of Acton.

## Wrestling with the powers that be

BY MAGGIE  
PETRUSHEVSKY  
The New Tanner

What sort of requirements do we place on people heading up unofficial health care organizations? Do we ask they understand anything of the medical needs of their customers, let alone the psychological needs? Do we even require them to live in the real world in financial terms?

Recently a friend remarked at the difference in attitude between management of a care agency now and when it first started more than 10 years ago. Then the group had no money, made do with what they could beg or borrow and served the public with one staffer and a number of volunteers.

Now the group has several paid staff, a professional director and the attitude that the public owes the group money and support. Although they get considerable public financing through government grants and United Way, anyone working with them is also expected to provide his service at much less than the going rate, if not as an outright gift.

Three other friends are experiencing something similar after running foul of the bureaucracy in another well-known care agency.

Marilyn was an administrative assistant in the agency's Toronto head office until last fall. At that point in-fighting between her immediate supervisor and another department head got so bad she had to leave to escape the office tensions. Because she is over 50, highly qualified and experienced, has severe arthritis and an obesity problem, finding new employment was not easy. Cathy recruits fundraising canvassers and works with clients out of the organization's Etobicoke office. She has been harassed so much by supervisors questioning every statement on her time card or case reports she is under doctor's care on the verge of mental and physical collapse. The lady is hearing impaired, has severe spine damage from childhood and heads up the staff union since the last

two union presidents were fired. (I wonder why staff feel the need of a union?)

Margaret was a caregiver in Halton until she won a grievance over improper discipline. The original manager was replaced but the new one was just as insecure. A situation which could have been negotiated wound up costing Margaret her job and her faith that right triumphs if you persevere.

Margaret asked for weekends off during her twin sister's visit. That sister, a Berlin accountant, had polio as a child and now lives in a wheelchair. Such requests had always met with understanding and cooperation until a new office manager took over scheduling workloads for caregivers a couple of years ago. Her manager's inconsiderate scheduling last year almost caused a permanent rift between Margaret and her sister.

Tactful attempts to avoid a repeat of last year's chaos resulted in Margaret's new supervisor throwing her authority around on Margaret's annual performance review. Suddenly after many successful years, now she had clients raising objections to the way she treated them. Demands for specifics brought vague answers. After considerable pushing, she received details on one incident.

Margaret had not seen the client in over 11 months and never according to the situation he described.

Margaret refused to sign the questionable evaluation because signing it meant she agreed with it. Well, after saying it meant nothing, cajoling, then threatening, her supervisor finally suspended her for refusing to sign the incriminating document.

"What do they think dictators do?" Margaret questions. "That was the favourite interrogation tactic in East Berlin when I was a child. The Secret Police promise nothing will happen if you just sign the confession. Then when you do, they sentence or execute you because, after all, you 'confessed'. What do they think I am? Stupid?"

And that would appear to be the general attitude among these groups' management types. You can't be too bright or you wouldn't take that sort of work.

Front line workers only receive minimum wage or slightly more. They work awkward hours because that is when their clients need them. They do messy, difficult and often unpleasant tasks, again, because that's what ill or disabled people need done for them.

In Margaret's case it was neither lack of skill nor lack of opportunity that sent her to the agency. It was choice and her familiarity with the needs of the disabled. As a European-trained fashion designer she worked with a Toronto firm for more than 20 years before deciding to avoid commuting and work closer to her Halton Hills home. She even took caregiver's training courses to put book learning with the practical skills she had learned by long experience.

The management types usually hold university degrees, but in business, finance or administration. To get into health or social fields they only need crash courses of weeks or perhaps a couple of months in some care-providing work placement for background. Then they are fit to run the show and tell front line service

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Tanner

59 Willow Street North  
Acton, Ontario  
L7J 1Z8

(519) 853-0051 Fax: 853-0052

### Publisher

Ted Tyler

### Editorial

Hartley Coles

Frances Niblock

Mike O'Leary

Ellen Piehl

Angela Tyler

### Advertising and Circulation

Marie Shadbolt

Vicki Pope

### Composing

Maggie Petrushevsky

Penny Zurbrigg

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