

# Butt out! Town may be smoke free by 2001

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The New Tanner

Drafts of the Town's proposed smoking bylaw have become tougher with each public meeting and now, the only question is when all public and work places in Halton Hills will be 100 per cent smoke free.

The latest proposed revision of a 1993 bylaw calls for a graduated smoking ban to 100 per cent by 2001, a bylaw Town CAO Steve Andrews said is "dramatically different and more strict" than an earlier version that didn't include a workplace smok-

ing ban, aimed mainly at protecting bar and restaurant workers from second-hand smoke.

At the last public meeting the Town was urged by local service clubs and health officials to go further with restrictions and the bylaw, as proposed, includes a gradual move to 75 per cent smoke-free this July, 85 per cent smoke-free next July, and 100 per cent smoke-free by 2001.

Last week councillors narrowly rejected Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson's attempt for a total ban by July 2000, as Andrews cautioned against going too fast with-

out allowing time to educate the bar and restaurant owners - silent so far in the public debate - who face the toughest changes.

Former bar owner, non-smoker Councillor Rick Bonnette, said he's sympathetic with local bar owners, some of whom had their property taxes doubled because of Current Value Assessment. He suggested they be able to stay 50 per cent smoking, 50 per cent non-smoking until September, after the traditionally slow summer season.

"I think we also have businesses at stake... and unless you're one of

the bars in town that has an outside patio, this is a very difficult time to be in business," Bonnette argued, unsuccessfully.

At Council on Monday, Bonnette said Royal Canadian Legions are "private clubs built by veterans that served this country for freedom" and should keep their exemption from the smoking bylaw.

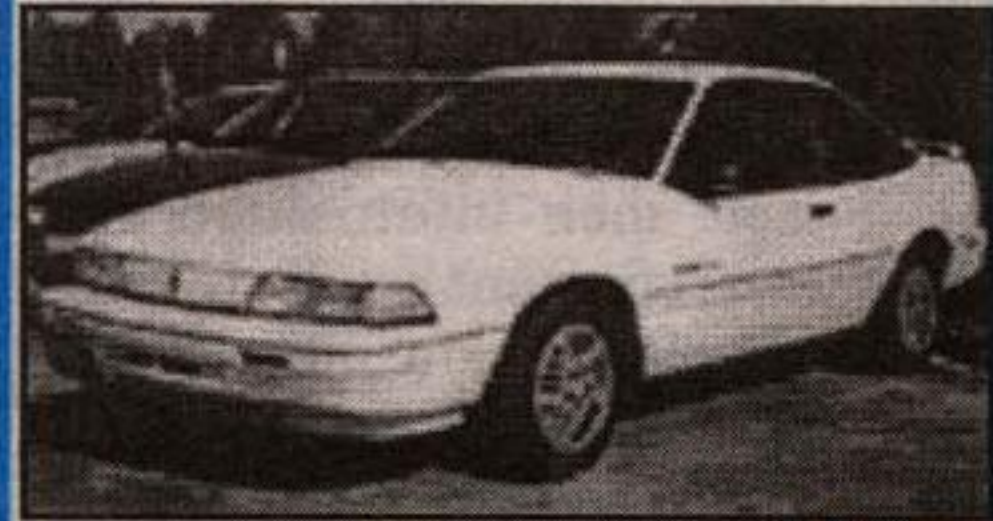
"I think it's rather Draconian to dictate to Legions," Bonnette argued, adding the Legions can police their own buildings.

Ward 2 Councillor Kevin Kuiack said private institutions should have

the right and opportunity to make their own judgement calls and warned the bylaw could lead to employees "squealing and ratting" on fellow employees who smoke illegally at work. The bylaw will be enforced on a complaint basis with help from the Region and the Town's already over-worked bylaw enforcement staff.

Council asked staff to report back with plans to invite the bars, restaurants, pool halls, Legions and others affected by the changes to the next public meeting, that will be held within the next three to four weeks.

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## What's Inside



Wayne who? See what reporter Maggie Petrushevsky really thinks about the hype surrounding the Great One. See Page 4.



Check out the local deals in home and garden products and services in our special section. See Pages 7 to 11.



MSB Mustangs take Milton volleyball tournament by storm. See Sports, Page 13.

## Budget review still needs fine tuning

### Earthy awards for St. Joseph's

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
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They urge their fellow students and parents to turn down the heat and turn off the lights. They recycle faithfully and encourage others to do the same - without nagging - and for their efforts to protect the planet, four students from St. Joseph Catholic School received environmental awards at a ceremony on Monday at Ontario Place.

Each year during Earth Week, Halton Region and the public and separate school boards honour outstanding environmental efforts in Halton schools - like the Energy Savers Patrol at St. Joseph - with Blue Planet awards.

While the entire Grade 6/7 class from the school attended the ceremony, four students - Mirko Tonkovich, Jonathan Borrelli, Jason Ivory and Tricia Joyce - were called to the stage with their teacher, Claire Lanois, to accept

See AWARDS, Page 2



**PLANET PROTECTORS:** Students at St. Joseph Catholic School received a Blue Planet '99 environmental award, sponsored by Halton Region and both Halton school boards, at a ceremony at Ontario Place on Monday. Jason Ivory (left), Mirko Tonkovich, Jonathan Borrelli and Tricia Joyce accepted the award. - Frances Niblock photo

An Acton homeowner with a Current Value Assessment of \$185,000 would pay \$9 more in municipal taxes this year - that's a 1.3 per cent increase for a Town tax bill of \$653 - if no further changes were made to the proposed operating budget - \$12.1 million of which must be raised through taxes.

Councillors and the mayor, sitting as the budget committee, began reviewing the operating budget on Tuesday night and prior to that meeting, Treasurer Ed DeSousa said they'd been "blind-sided" by the province which reduced a transfer payment by approximately \$780,000.

That could have resulted in a \$54 tax increase - or 8.3 per cent more - had Halton Region not received a similar amount from the province, allowing it to absorb most of the Halton Hills shortfall. A balance of \$2 will show up on the Region's tax bill.

"I think from my standpoint this was a very tough budget. We got blind-sided with the loss in funding in late March when we were in the midst of doing our budget, so it's been very tough," DeSousa said, adding the operating budget focuses on maintaining existing service levels.

Further meetings were scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday (today), if needed, to complete the budget committee's review of the operating budget.

### Capital budget

The budget committee pared approximately \$400,000 from the ambitious \$7.4 million proposed capital budget

during three recent meetings. Plans for a new fire station were put on hold, reducing the budget by \$365,000, leaving \$120,000 to study Georgetown's fire service needs.

Councillors included \$200,000 in the budget - 95 per cent of it developers' dollars - as seed money for a new recreational facility - a leisure centre and/or the twinning of Alcott arena.

Councillor Norm Elliott said he'd support spending the \$200,000, but noted debate over a leisure facility is being watched with "very close scrutiny" in his ward.

"What I'm concerned about is the mistaken idea that a leisure centre is upper most in everybody's mind. I can assure you it's not... and people that are looking for decent roads in front of their homes perhaps might tell you at election time that the leisure centre isn't the most important thing on their mind," Elliott said.

To mark his point, Elliott gave staff a letter sent him by a Churchill Road resident complaining about the poor shape of that road and asking for long-awaited repairs.

Councillors hope to approve both the operating and capital budgets on May 10.

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