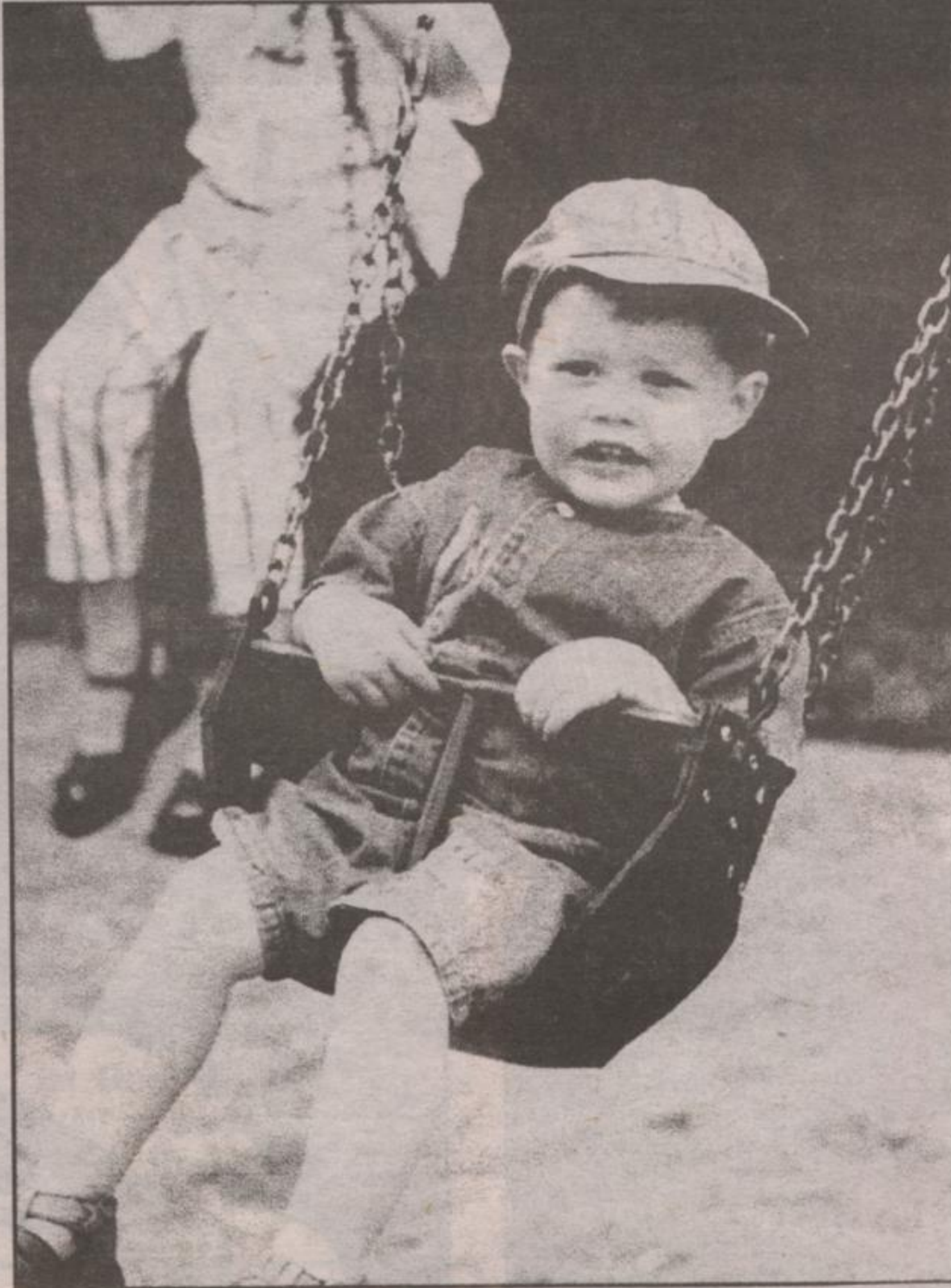


**MR. MUSCLE:** Dylan Conroy, 3, shows off his style as he prepares to whip down the slide at Prospect Park. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo



**SWINGIN' ALONG:** Myles Pratt, 20 months, found Prospect Park swings a great place to rest on a warm summer day. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo

# Dumping on agricultural land is trashed by its opponents

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The New Tanner

The Town hopes hefty security deposits will deter the people from dumping clean fill on agricultural land in Halton Hills - a practice attacked by a ratepayer and several councillors last week.

Calling clean fill companies "semi-random dirt dumpers," Tenth Line resident Peter Stabins asked Council for a bylaw to regulate the "excessive dumping of landfill" on farmlands in Halton Hills.

He argued the dumping is unsafe, tears up the roads, is ugly, creates unreasonable noise and dust pollution, is a risk to well water supply and is a safety hazard.

Stabins said early last summer a "relentless procession of dump trucks," as many as 44 an hour at peak times, began delivering soil and debris to several farm lots north of his home. He tracked several loads back to Mississauga subdivision and an Oakville industrial construction site.

"This dumping was not for the benefit of the farms, given they had been suc-

cessfully farmed without difficulty for over the last years," Stabins said, adding there are now six dump sites on agricultural land within two miles of his home.

An expected bylaw is overdue and Ward 2 Councillor Kathy Gastle, who called dumping "appalling" at one site, said Halton Hills will continue getting unwanted fill from neighbouring Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville - all of which have bylaws - until Halton Hills has its own legislation.

Gastle said under a reclamation of farmland program, farmers can apply for a permit to accept fill.

"I'm not suggesting that it's right, but it is allowed..." Gastle said.

Town engineer Bob Austin said the bylaw, delayed by staff holiday schedules and debate over a possible grandfather clause that could allow existing sites to continue accepting fill, will allow rural land owners to apply for a permit to alter land.

"So, it's not yes or no, can they or can't they. It's a permit system and with payment of sufficient funds to cover property damages, they would get a permit,"

Austin said, adding most permit requests are approved and most of the material being dumped is soil from construction sites.

Acton Councillor Norm Elliott questioned how the Town ensures the dumped fill is clean and noted there's a landfill connotation to the issue.

"The thing that blows me away here is that 40 miles away from us the biggest landfill issue in Canada is being heard. This isn't garbage we're talking about - at least I don't think it is," Elliott said, adding there's doesn't appear to be any enforcement of legislation to prevent dumping of unclean fill from things like abandoned gas stations. Austin said they don't have any jurisdiction if they suspect the fill isn't clean, other than go to the province.

Mayor Serjeantson said if farm land isn't being

farmed, but being used for commercial purposes for dumping clean fill, the owners should not be allowed to pay agricultural tax rates that are just 25 per cent of residential rates.

"It seems to me that there has to be more ways to discourage this (dumping)... if it's a business, then call it a business and make them get a business licence," Serjeantson said, adding higher taxes might keep the land for farmland.

Staff said regardless of the use, if a property is zoned agricultural it is assessed and taxed at the agricultural rate and only the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation can change the assessment.

Staff was unable to say if the owners of the existing dump site on agricultural land were private farmers or if developers and trucking companies had bought the land.

## West Nile virus

The West Nile Virus has not been detected in Canada to date in spite of an active surveillance program. However, West Nile Virus Disease has again been confirmed in a New York City resident. Just last week the virus was identified in a crow in a Buffalo, New York, suburb, close enough to Ontario to raise suspicion it may have already arrived.

The West Nile Virus usually affects birds such as crows, jays, English sparrows and various waterbirds, but can be spread by mosquitoes to animals and people. Most infected persons have no symptoms or develop a mild illness such as fever, headache and body aches. Some

persons develop a mild rash or swollen lymph glands. Only a small number of cases, especially the elderly, develop encephalitis.

As a precautionary measure, the Halton Region health Department is advising residents of Halton to take personal protective measures against mosquitoes.

The Halton Region Health Department is monitoring the occurrence and progression of the West Nile Virus in the United States and is continuing local surveillance through the collection and submission of birds for laboratory analysis in cooperation with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre in Guelph.



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