

Halton gets Triple A rating again from Moody's

Halton Region has again received an AAA credit rating from Moody's Investor Service. This is the highest rating given by the agency. Achieving and retaining an AAA credit rating has allowed Halton Region and the Area Municipalities (Halton Hills, Towns of Milton, and Oakville, and the City of Burlington) to borrow funds at the lowest possible interest rates.

The Region's long-term debt is rated by

two external rating services. A report from Standard and Poors is anticipated within the next month. Standard and Poors currently rates Halton as AAA.

Moody's confirmed that Halton has a stable outlook, which indicates confidence in the Region's ability to retain the rating into the future. In particular Moody's noted the following in assigning the rating: "Halton maintains significant fiscal flexibility to address

risks posed by an economic downturn. Although it faces a substantial capital spending program in the coming years, Moody's expects the Region to be able to manage this challenge without any deterioration in credit quality."

"Moody's confidence in Halton reaffirms our fiscal strength and sets the tone for continuing the Region's future economic health," said Joyce Savoline, Chairman, Halton Region.

"Moody's assessment confirms that Halton Region has been responsible in its approach to financial challenges posed by cuts in provincial grants, the province's realignment of local services, and other pressures facing the municipalities within the Region, such as the need for Long Term Care facilities, water plant expansions and transportation," added Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer, Halton Region.

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What's Inside



House League hockey is in full swing and five Tanner teams are still in the running for OMHA championships. See Sports Pages 12 and 13.



The guy with the mayor looks suspiciously like a certain movie star. Is he? See Page 6.



Happy Valentine's Day to all our readers. It's also Heart and Stroke Month. See the spread on Pages 8 and 9.



Two members of the Acton Figure Skating Club have passed rigorous tests to advance in the sport. See Page 13.

Vandals rouse patriotic ardour

Still in critical condition

The 49-year-old Acton man who stepped in front of an empty school bus on Mill Street over three weeks ago remains in serious condition in the critical care unit at the Sunnybrook Trauma Centre in Toronto.

Patrick Kelly, a horse groomer who lived at the Station Hotel for the past seven or eight years, suffered multiple fractures when he stepped off the north curb into the path of an eastbound Tyler Transport bus.

On Tuesday, hospital staff didn't know if Kelly had improved enough to be interviewed by Halton police, who have been unable to question Kelly since the accident because of his condition.



SHROVE TUESDAY: Carly Hammond, 7, enjoys a mouthful of pancake at St. Alban's Church Pancake Supper in the church hall Tuesday evening. The annual supper at St. Alban's has been a tradition in Acton for decades. The custom of eating pancakes on the day before Ash Wednesday is centuries old, sort of fueling up before the 40 days of Lent. — Angela Tyler photo

Draft smoking by-law coming

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Looks like it may take longer for Halton Hills to go 100 per cent smoke-free in both public places and workplaces.

The current smoking bylaw calls for a total ban on July 1, 2003, but last summer Council set up a committee with a mandate to consider a July 2002 target, and while the proposed draft is tougher than what's currently on the books, it doesn't include a 100 per cent ban on all smoking, this summer.

Town CAO Steve Andrews said the bylaw review committee — a bar owner, restaurant owner, Town and Region staff,

Legion representatives and several citizens — is united in having a phased-in approach to the legislation.

Andrews said the draft, which still requires political and public debate and could include changes, is "very progressive and very equitable."

"For at least a good portion of the day and night, there will be a rule that says no smoking, period — ban — no provision for any more smoking in areas of restaurant," Andrews said, adding the committee knows it will never make everyone happy.

"We think the proposed draft is very reasonable and measured approach, but we're also very flexible in that we'll hear what people say about it and if need be, make adjustments," he said.

In the past those adjustments have included an exemption to the bylaw for both the Acton and Georgetown Legions.

The current bylaw allows bars to have smoking in up to 50 per cent of their seats up until 10 p.m., when total smoking is allowed.

Restaurants must be 75 per cent no smoking until 10 p.m., and then they can offer up to 50 per cent of their seats to smokers.

When the current bylaw was toughened up two years ago, health care professionals, including the Regional medical officer of health, urged Council to go 100 per cent smoke free as quickly as possible, while many bar and restaurant owners feared what smoking restrictions would do to their business.

Steal 9/11 flags from yards

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Forget about coddling, counselling and complaining to police — Acton residents Joanne and Paul Bissonnette know what they'd do if they caught whoever stole a Canadian flag and an American flag from their backyard overnight Saturday/Sunday.

"I'd make them sit down and watch the videos of the terrorist planes slamming into the World Trade Centre and then I'd show them a video of my cousin going off to Afghanistan (with the Canadian Armed Forces)," an angry and hurt Joanne Bissonnette said on Monday. While the patriotic Bissonnettes have flown a Canadian flag from their Main Street North home for several years, they put up the American flag after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

They discovered both flags missing on Sunday when they went to their backyard to lower the flags to half-staff to honour the late Princess Margaret who died on the weekend.

"Stealing the flags is so unpatriotic — what else do we have other than our flag?" Mrs. Bissonnette said on Monday.

Their all-weather vinyl American flag and Canadian flag, which had belonged to Mrs. Bissonnette's late mother, are valued at \$80

Continued on Page 2.

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