

Needle exchange program gets go-ahead

The Halton Region Needle Exchange Program is set to move beyond the pilot project stage.

Regional health and social services committee members passed a motion last week that will see the program— named Exchange Works— become a permanent Health Department program, subject to the approval of the 2002 operating budget. The annual Exchange Works budget is estimated at \$81,000.

Regional council formally passed the motion Wednesday.

"Based on the information we have right now, we feel the program needs to continue," Medical Health Officer Dr. Bob Nosal told the committee. "So much of this depends on the contacts and networking that takes place and that's what has been the focus so far."

Exchange Works began operation in May, developing partnerships with service agencies, creating educational material for injection drug users and conducting outreach work.

Needle exchanges have also been organized at the Sexual Health Clinics in Milton, Burlington, Acton and Georgetown, though to date, none have been used.

"It's very slow gaining the trust of users because of the illegal nature of injection drug use," explained Denise Mousseau, Hamilton community outreach worker and representative on the Halton Needle Exchange Advisory Committee.

"The key to outreach is that it's client driven."

The mobile exchange service has seen substantially more success, said Halton Outreach Worker Cecil McDougall. To date, 78 individuals have used the needle exchange, 30 of which used the program more than once.

"We've made a conscious effort here in Halton to ensure we also include those who

inject steroids. The concern being that young people might be exposed to the sharing of needles," McDougall said.

While the program received the support of the committee, Oakville Councillor Jack Dennison and Richard Malbouef of Milton expressed disappointment in the need to spend taxpayer dollars for a needle exchange.

"I'm going to support it, but I have to tell you I definitely have difficulty with it," said Dennison.

—By Richard Vivian, special

Town to review ward boundaries

The Town of Halton Hills will review the boundaries of its four wards before the next municipal election in 2003.

While the boundary review has been prompted by the large constituency within the Ward 4 (which includes Georgetown South), all wards will be considered.

This pleased Ward 2 Councillor Bryan Lewis who commented his rural ward covers about 390 sq. kilometres with many of the hamlets sitting along the outer edges of the town's borders.

The review will attempt to balance the population distribution among the wards. According to the 1997 enumeration list (and many more people have moved to town since then), the population is distributed among the wards as follows:

Ward 1, 7,304; Ward 2, 10,328; Ward 3, 11,415 and Ward 4, 12,493.

It's staff intent to complete the boundary review by May/June of 2002.



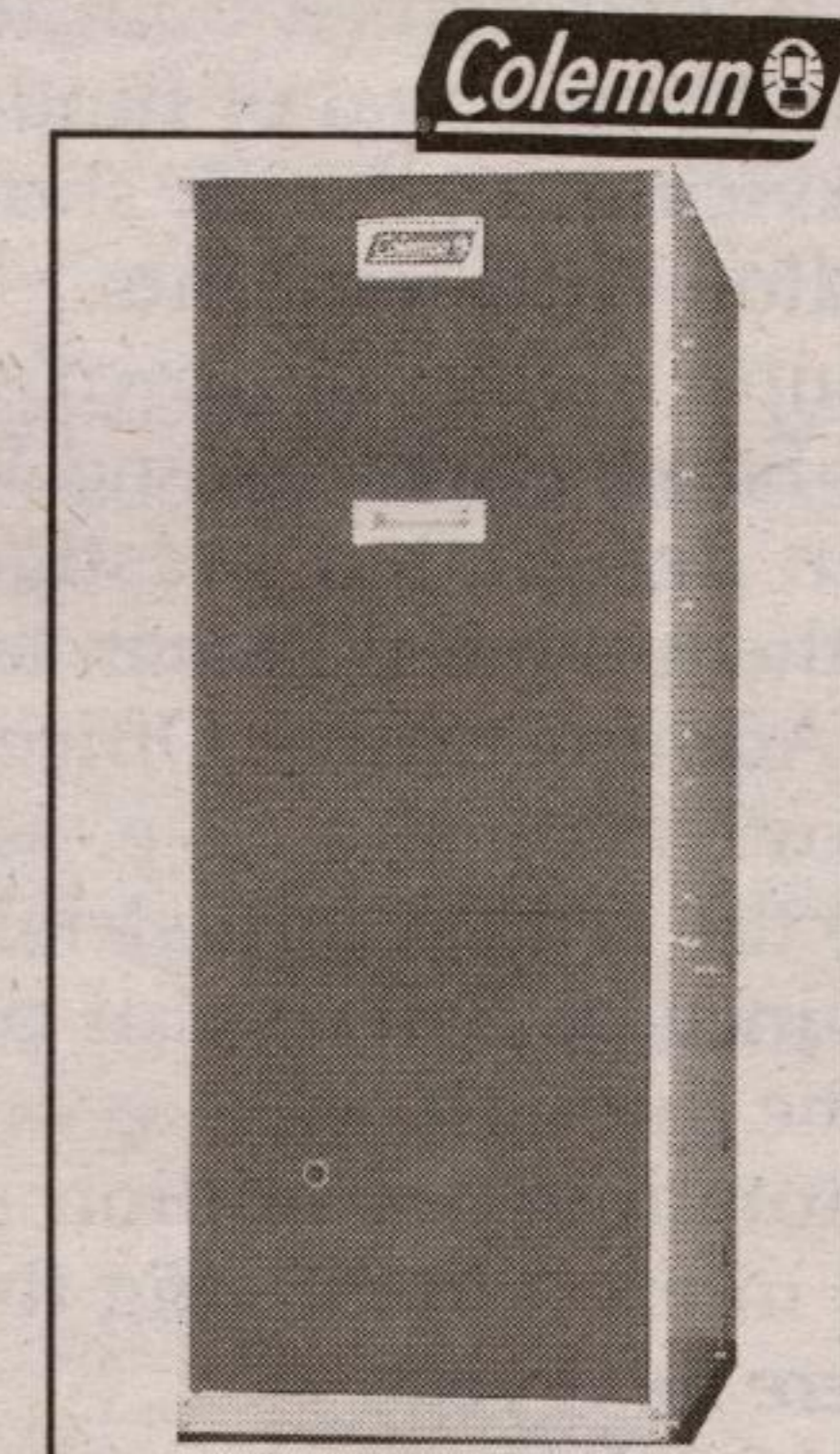
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by ALEX TRENTON DENTURIST

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