

# Air pollution sixth biggest killer in Halton, councillors told

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) needs to improve its air quality index, regional councillors said in a motion last week.

The motion—approved by the Halton health and social service committee—followed the release of a regional staff report indicating air pollution is the sixth biggest killer in Halton.

In a report titled, *Illness from Air Pollution — A Halton Perspective*, Halton's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal said air pollution is directly related to 55 of 849 respiratory and cardiovascular disease

deaths in Halton during 1997 (the latest year of information available). Air pollution is also connected to 428 of 3,202 hospital admissions in 2000.

While changing the air quality index wouldn't improve concerns about air pollution, it would better inform people of the risks, Nosal told the committee.

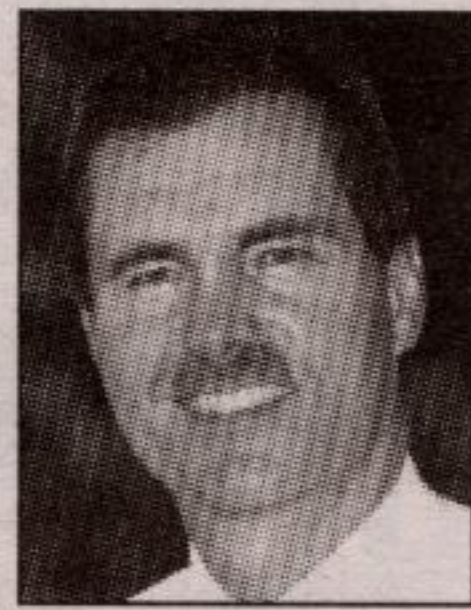
The existing air quality index categorizes the air as very good, good, moderate, poor or very poor.

"If you're looking at this terminology, you're basically assuming as long as it's good,

very good or moderate, it's not a problem, there is not an issue. That is wrong. Most of the health effects that are occurring are occurring at these levels," Nosal explained.

"They (MOE) have to start changing the words to low risk, medium risk or high risk."

Air quality ratings are based on ozone, particulates, sulphates, nitrogen dioxide, sul-



DR. BOB NOSAL

phur dioxide and carbon monoxide levels.

The focus of the index also needs to be shifted from local factory emissions to the overall pollutant concentrations in the air, the medical officer continued.

"The bottom line is that it isn't what's coming out of the stack, it's what's in the air that all of us are breathing that's important. You can have a situation where everyone's emissions are below standards and you've got terrible air because of the concentration of it."


Roughly half of Halton's air

pollution comes from the United States, 30 per cent from vehicle emissions, seven per cent from industry and the remaining pollutants from households.


Federal and provincial involvement is needed to appropriately address emission issues, the committee agreed.

If the committee's call for improvements to the air quality index are endorsed by regional council today (Wednesday), Nosal will forward the request to Minister of the Environment.

—By Richard Vivian, special



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Future Shop apologizes for the following error made on the front cover of this week's flyer dated April 10-16, 2002.

- Please be advised that the Compaq 4410CA Computer Package does not include M64 32MB AGP Video Card as stated. Instead, this system comes with an 815e integrated chipset with an open AGP slot.

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