

*Editorial*

# Smoke-screen

**W**e really can't blame Halton Hills residents if they are confused about the current non-smoking bylaw (circa 2000).

After all, it seems like town council has been discussing this issue (and dithering with finding a solution) since before Sir Walter Raleigh began puffing.

In its latest attempt to "deal" with the issue, council this week opted to delay a public meeting on a non-smoking bylaw until January.

In 2000 council passed its current smoking control bylaw which included a recommendation to achieve 100 per cent smoke-free status by July 1, 2003. All that was needed was a meeting to invite public comment. This past spring, council deferred setting the public meeting date and opted to request the provincial government enact an Ontario-wide law.

The province, also wanting to avoid this hot potato, insisted the matter was a municipal concern and threw the issue back to the local level. Tuesday, council, obviously moved by pleas from the Halton Hills Restaurant and Bar Association to delay the public meeting, has chosen to put off the meeting until January 2003.

That move will almost certainly see the potential July 1, 2003 smoke-free date go up in smoke.

We sympathize with the association and its situation of potential customer loss, but we, like Councillor Moya Johnson (who stands alone from her colleagues on this matter), would like to see a smoke-free Halton Hills sooner, rather than later.

Or at least in our lifetime.



## Letters to the editor....

### Police must be firmer with party-crashers

*(This letter was originally sent to Const. Laurel Barnett. A copy was made available for publication.)*

Dear Constable Barnett,

#### Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be signed and include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

**Mail or drop off**

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The articles you have been writing for *The Independent & Free Press* have been very informative and it is clear you take your responsibilities as Community Support Officer very seriously.

It is as a result of reading the article, Do you know where your children are?, that I am writing this letter. The advice you gave regarding not allowing parties to be crashed unrealistically puts the responsibility on the hosts to avoid this from occurring. In Georgetown, party crashing is to older teens what school-yard bullying is to children and younger teens.

It is apparent to me that in Georgetown crashing parties has become a sport for a certain group of young men and women—many of whom are known to the police.

Teens I know are perhaps most frustrated over the inability of the police to deal effectively with these gangs of youths who are ruining their parties. Whether or not alcohol is involved, the Georgetown gang of party-crashers appear to enjoy trespassing, damaging (property) and assaulting people.

Would they be back week after week

if there were any real consequences once the police were called? Granted, sometimes the teens who are hosting the party choose not to lay charges, hoping this gracious act will send the party-crashers off with their tails between their you-know-what. Unfortunately, this is an incorrigible bunch. They do come back.

How quickly the police respond to 911 calls and how effectively the police handle calls for assistance when parties are crashed is very inconsistent. The lack of meaningful and significant consequences results in an acceleration in the level of violence and mayhem.

Yes, Const. Barnett, parents should be very concerned about this situation. And yes, in spite of our efforts, teens are drinking under age. And it is for that reason they do not come forward for fear that one wrong is going to be seen as causing another.

I don't believe I am overstating it when I say that until there is consistency in the way bullies are dealt with when they crash parties, the only outcome will be a growing likelihood of more injuries or worse.

Joanne E. Harrington, Georgetown

### Fire victims thank firefighters, neighbours

Dear editor,

We wish to thank Captain Venema and his team of firefighters of the Halton Hills Fire Department.

Their quick response to the recent fire at Gould Crescent was truly remarkable. We were very impressed with the way they handled the situation and for the kindness they showed to our family.

We would also thank the many neighbours who offered their homes, food, drinks and blankets and also for their kind words of encouragement. A special thank you to Nell and Margaret for taking care of our one-week-old daughter while the firefighters worked and we were out of the house.

Many thanks to George and Ginnie and their family for the snacks for our three-year-old son.

We appreciate everyone who helped make a horrible evening much more bearable.

Helen and Les Bentley, Acton

# The Independent & Free Press

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