

Editorial

There IS a problem

Unless something is done soon to reverse a disturbing social trend, the growing chasm between Halton's wealthiest and poorest seems destined to widen.

Despite an apparent willingness to deny a problem exists, homelessness continues to worsen—despite all of Halton's affluence. In fact, according to a new report on the subject, the homeless situation has become far worse over a recent 10-year period.

The study—*Quality of Life in Canadian Communities—Incomes, Shelter and Necessities Report*—notes that 1,200-1,300 Halton residents are left without a place to live or are at serious risk of becoming homeless each year. This despite the fact that the region continues to record one of the highest median household incomes across the country—nearly \$75,000 in 2001.

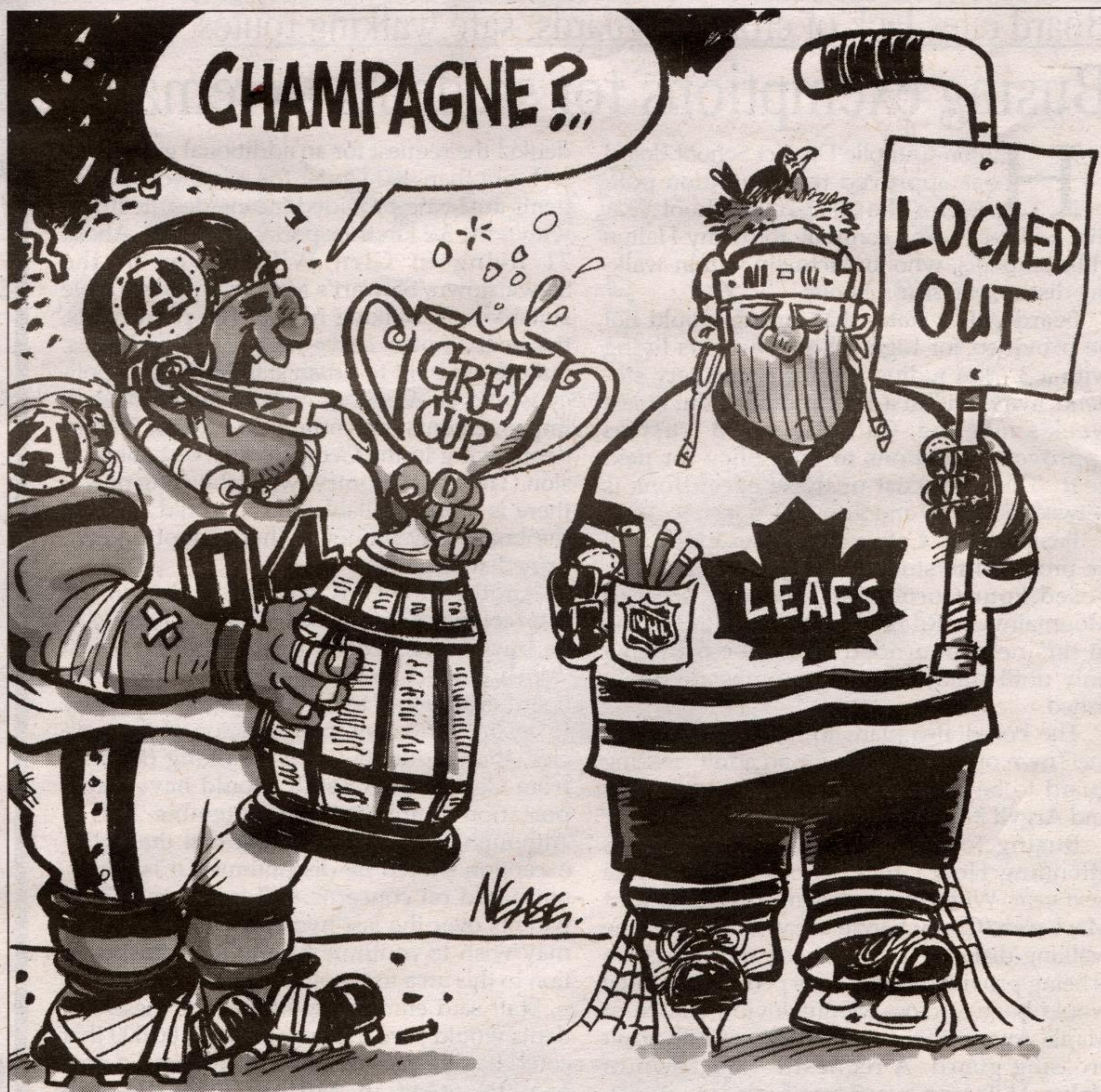
While the region's wealth breeds the misinformed opinion that few people in Halton struggle to make ends meet, statistics would appear to betray that viewpoint.

Comparing data between 1991 and 2001, the numbers are troubling. In 2001, 5.4 per cent of families in the region were considered poor—no significant change from 10 years earlier. However, with Halton's population increasing by more than 62,000 people over that period, that means many more families joined the ranks of those struggling to pay their bills or put food on the table.

In 2001, there were 7.5 times as many wealthy families than lower-income ones. Ten years earlier the ratio was just 5-to-1.

Released by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the report notes that its homeless statistics don't even include Halton's homeless youths who live a couch-to-couch existence.

With the gap between the Halton's have and have-not households widening, overcoming an unwillingness to admit a problem exists may be the greatest roadblock to finding a solution.



Letters to the editor...

Reader 'demonized' Barber Mill opponents

Dear editor,

Dawn Falls' letter of November 19 provides a fine example of the "straw man" technique of mislead-

ing argument, by creating the impression that local residents expressed adamant hostility to the very concept of restoring the Barber Mill site at council.

My notes from the same meeting show that while various groups raised objections, local residents objected only to the excessive scale of the proposed development, which indeed looks like it was designed for a much larger site.

Such objections are not unusual—developers often initially propose excessively large and concentrated developments, in the expectation that negotiations with the local community will result in a project that is smaller, but better for the community and still profitable for the developer. In fact, this happened in the development across the road from the Barber Mill site, which today has a playground as result of that process.

It was unseemly of Ms. Falls to demonize our desire for a more balanced development of the Barber

Mills site, and to attack her fellow citizens, both as a group and as individuals. She would do the community a service by taking an anger management course while reasonable people work toward a result that is beneficial to Georgetown as a whole.

Brian Lyons, Georgetown

Great coverage

Dear editor,

Congratulations to *The Independent & Free Press* on your great coverage of the Rebels' trip to the Halton football finals at Ivor Wynne Stadium.

Your photographer and writers captured the great time all the parents and students had cheering on our boys. While we were unable to obtain victory, all the players and coaches achieved greatness in the hearts of all the spectators.

Thank you for your coverage, and thanks to the players for a great game.

Ross Pezzack, Acton

Residents should support hometown businesses

Dear editor,

I must say that I am quite upset about what is happening to our local businesses.

I've watched as many places have gone out of business over the last few years, even months. I've lived in Georgetown and surrounding area most of my life. I also work in one of these businesses. Day after day I encounter people who don't understand that something may be expensive to buy, but you are paying for the quality and service you receive when you are in a store.

There are also those who try to bargain with you over the price of something, but they don't realize that the person running the business is trying to make a living just like anybody else.

There are many wonderful places to shop in Georgetown where you do get quality products and service. These places have been in Georgetown for many years and hope to be for many more. It is up to local residents to keep these places going.

So, stop going to all the box stores to buy items that you can easily find locally. Buy nice or buy twice.

Trish Morecroft, Brampton

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.

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