

Mom reported to CAS for not returning son's dental form to region

Continued from pg. 1

She said she will allow her son to be screened again at school, "but again, I will not be demeaned, humiliated or forced like a child to get a dentist to prove that I have sought dental health for my child. I have done so of my own accord."

She said the region official told her that, by law, she was required to report to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) that she hadn't returned the dental form.

"I have accepted that the incident will be reported to Children's Aid and that the municipality justifies their intrusion on my private life and that of my children's lives because it benefits their ability to follow up with those in need of treatment, but I will not give up my right to privacy, my right to freedom from unreasonable interference in my private life."

Gisele Franck, manager of dental health for Halton Region, said most parents are very happy with the dental screening program, which she said is mandated by the province.

She said the goal is to ensure children's dental health is looked after.

The form sent to parents includes an option they can check requesting financial assistance to cover basic dental treatment.

"I think it's fair, it's a service mainly provided to the parents," said Franck.

She said the region makes every effort to work with the parents.

"If they provide us with the name of the dentist, we can call the dentist's office," she said.

She said parents have 100 days to get the dental work done on their child and the health department follows up with a re-screening of the child.

She said at that point if the dental work is not complete the matter is referred to the CAS.

"Dental situations that are not treated are deemed neglect by law," said Franck.

She said last year of the 16,000 kids screened across Halton, less than .01 per cent were referred to the CAS.

Greg Flood, spokesperson for the Ministry of



Emy Stockwell of Georgetown, shown here with her son Matthew, believes a form sent to her home after her son received a dental screening at school requiring her to get a signature from a dentist stating he had initiated dental treatment on her child is an invasion of her privacy rights, and intrusive. She refused to have the form signed.
Photo by Ted Brown

Health and Promotion, which oversees the program, said the signature of the dentist is a "legislative requirement."

He stressed people shouldn't lose sight of the purpose of the program.

"It's a very important program," said Flood. "It's about ensuring that youth are having appropriate dental services and that's why this program is offered by the government."

He added the program enables parents who can't afford dental services to get them for their child.

He said since the program has been administered by his Ministry he has never heard of a complaint similar to the one raised by Stockwell.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

Only 401 polled Councillors question validity of survey

A Town survey on town-wide priorities that contacted only 400 residents had many Halton Hills councillors questioning its statistical validity.

Compustat Consultants' telephone interviews of 401 citizens in November and an on-line survey of 128 town employees showed roads as the number one concern in town. This \$30,000 "indicator survey" was commissioned to reveal perceptions of how well the Town delivers its services, and where the Town should be spending its money in its 2006 budget.

But some councillors were reluctant to trust a survey that represented the views of a minority of all citizens.

"Why does 400 people out of a town of 50,000 people or so give us a reliable sample of what people really want," asked Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson. She pointed out that the survey says 34 per cent say transit is important, yet when councillors were considering implementing one last year, "the hue and cry was this is the last thing we want."

Councillor Bryan Lewis agreed. "I don't want to challenge (the survey) but I'm having a great deal of difficulty understanding that one per cent of our population should be telling us where we should be putting the bulk of our money."



BRYAN LEWIS

Compustat president Ted Hodge said, "That's the value of doing survey research. In an unbiased manner you can go about randomly selecting from your population and according to well-known and well-used statistical assumptions, we can gather an accurate opinion of what people are thinking."

Hodge said if he repeated the survey with another randomly selected 400 people, he would get the same results, 19 times out of 20. That translates to a 95 per cent confidence level. The "magic number" in statistical research is 400-600 calls to achieve an accurate assessment.

"That number has been around for a long time," he said. "As long as we're being random what we say here holds true."

While all demographic groups were represented in the survey, a higher proportion of females and people over the age of 55 responded. Of the 1,200 initial calls made, 28 per cent of the people reached refused to participate. Of those who did, 67 per cent lived in Georgetown, 21 per cent in Acton and 12 per cent in rural or hamlet areas.

The survey showed that residents gave high importance and high satisfaction ratings to firefighting services, school crossing guards, street lighting and public parks and open spaces.

Standing out as priorities were the building and maintenance of roads, economic development, bylaw enforcement, town planning, town facilities and traffic control.

Veteran Councillor Ron Chatten ended the debate by stating, "We'll use it as a general guide and that's exactly what it is for. If roads hadn't appeared where it was, then we probably would have made a big mistake. We've taken two per cent of taxes for the last three years (under the pavement management program) and what have we done that for? To improve the roads!"

"The survey has done exactly what the people wanted," said Chatten. "I think we have to be careful. Let's not read the world into a survey."

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Police remind parents to review safety tips

Continued from pg. 1

- Play safe and play together. Do not play in remote areas of parks or take short cuts through the woods.
- Do not loiter on the way to or from school.
- Do not go anywhere with a stranger, and do not accept rides for any reason. Do not be afraid to say "no" to any request, and run away quickly.
- Advise an adult of any suspicious strangers right away.
- Do not accept any treats such as candies, toys or money from a stranger for any reason.
- Always notify your parents where you are and where you are going.

- For teens, parents are urged to stress the importance of:
 - Never accepting rides from strangers.
 - Walking to and from school with friends when possible, and not taking shortcuts through remote areas if alone.
 - Notifying your parents where you are and where you are going, especially if it is a change in routine.

Bullying prevention forum set

Community and Parents Partnering for Kids (C.A.P.P) is sponsoring a Bullying Prevention presentation on Wednesday, March 1.

Parents can learn what they can do to prevent bullying and what support is available in the community. A panel of experts will provide information, discussion and address questions on bullying prevention.


The panel will include Transition for Youth Workers, Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board administrators, public health nurses and members of the Halton Regional Police.

The meeting will run from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Mainway Arena Auditorium in Burlington (one block north of the QEW at Walker's Line). Seating is limited.



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