

SENIORS MONTH

Town hosts free events
See schedule

Page 2



THE INDEPENDENT
& FREE PRESS

Halton Hills' Community Newspaper

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Knowing when to
downsize your home

Page 7



8 Pages

Special pullout section

Halton aims to make region elder-friendly

STEPHANIE THIESSEN
Special to The IFP

A lot of work still has to be done to make Halton an elder-friendly community that'll meet the needs of future seniors, according to a report, *Quality of Life for Seniors in Halton Today and Tomorrow*, approved in principle by regional council this spring.

The Elder Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) prepared the report that's intended to be a guide for future planning and to help ensure the region is more elder-friendly.

"(We're looking at) what we can do to improve the quality of life for seniors," said ESAC member Corinne Hodgson.

The report states that from 2001 to 2015, Halton's seniors will increase from 45,000 to 82,000 and the number of seniors 85 years and older will almost triple from 4,000 to 11,000.

It recommends many ways to improve the quality of life for Halton's seniors, such as:

- Having governments and agencies work together to address the needs of low-income seniors.

"Currently, one in every eight seniors in Halton lives below the low-income cutoff," Hodgson said.

- Continuing to recruit physicians.

As far as seniors' health is concerned, what are needed are more health-care professionals who understand and are interested in working with seniors, Hodgson said.

- Ensuring the availability of affordable, accessible public transportation alternatives

- Designing communities to be more elder-friendly, like by having larger and more legible signage, accessible buildings, etc...

- Developing a continuum of housing options for seniors

"We need to plan for a variety of housing options to enable seniors to remain independent," Carole Ward, ESAC chair, said, adding as seniors age they're more likely to rent, so affordable and available rental housing is crucial. Also needed are more spaces at long-term care homes and supportive housing facilities.

- Promoting social engagement and reducing the risk of isolation through a variety of methods.

Council directed staff to consider the document in its development of plans and policies ensuring that Halton becomes a more elder-friendly community.

The motion also called for Regional Chairman Gary Carr to write to various provincial and federal ministers, along with the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) asking them to consider the report when creating policies and when funding and implementing programs.



Finding their chi

Under the instruction of Wilfried Rauser, Acton seniors take part in Tai Chi classes at the Acton Community Centre.

Photo by Ted Brown

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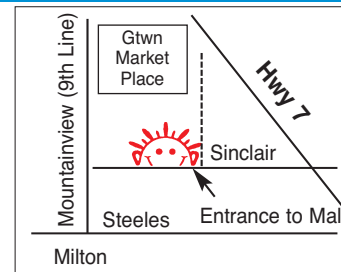
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