

# Dental health controversy arouses interest in program

It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. And some rather unfavorable publicity in a Hamilton newspaper concerning Halton County's dental health status, or lack of such, stirred up such a public outcry and such a controversy that Dr. Samuel Green, Director of Dental Health Services with the Halton County Health Unit, this week reports the controversy has spurred a new awakening concerning dental health and things are improving almost daily.

The following is Dr. Green's special report on what positive results have transpired in the past few weeks since the controversy first hit the front pages of the newspapers. He was earlier quoted as saying the dental health of children in the northern part of Halton was in grim shape—a statement he vehemently denied.

By S. M. Green, D.D.S., D.D.P.H.,  
Director, Dental Health Services,  
Halton County Health Unit

I would like to thank the editors of this newspaper for the opportunity of expressing some of my thoughts concerning the recent uproar caused by a misinterpreted article printed recently regarding dental health in Halton County.

Due to the constructive efforts and mature approach by the community-minded citizens, politicians and the capable direction of the Halton County Health Unit, definite positive results have evolved in the past few weeks.

## BENEFICIAL RESULTS

### INTEREST

In general, there has been a greater interest aroused as to the dental health status of the community, especially that of the children.

Many principals such as Mr. McKenzie at Robert Little School, Mr. Smith at M. Z. Bennett School, have enthusiastically backed our efforts to promote dental health and have even gone to the expense of purchasing audio-visual aids to help motivate children in the classrooms. The loss of teeth and impaired mouth function are largely the result of neglect.

The solution to the problem of neglect is education in the use of preventive and control measures. The educational facilities in our schools, therefore, can and do play an important role in raising the level of dental health of the children in the County. To realize this goal of better dental health for children, I, Dr. Green, met with a number of principals and their staff at the local schools to discuss any dental problems, suggestions and solutions.

## DENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM GUIDE

On February 19, I was invited by Mr. Lavender to attend a meeting at the North Halton board centre. It was an extremely constructive and productive meeting, where both parties re-emphasized their willingness, intention and desire to co-operate completely in deriving advanced concepts of teaching dental health in the schools. To this end, the North Halton Board staff is working with me to establish a "dental health curriculum guide" for use by teachers from Kindergarten to grade five. A pilot study of this booklet is being carried out by Mr. McKenzie in the Robert Little School in Acton.

## T.V. ADVERTISEMENT

Mass communication is an important vehicle in promoting good dental health habits. In Georgetown, the local cable T.V. company has offered to telecast spot announcements of "Murphy the Molar". This is a new educational concept identifying dental health to the youngsters. The co-operation of this local company is extremely useful and appreciated by the Halton County Health Unit.

## VOLUNTEERS

A number of dentists have recently contacted me expressing their concern and desire to improve the dental health of the community. One dentist in particular, in Georgetown, has very generously offered some of his time gratis, to aid in the screening and education program in that area.

## FREE DENTAL KITS

One of the major manufacturers of dental toothpaste has been given permission to distribute free kits containing toothpaste, a toothbrush, dental literature, project booklets and disclosing wafers... to children in grades two and three. These dental kits have been approved by the Halton County Board of Education and by the Ontario Dental Association.

## MORE DENTISTS IN AREA

Mayor Doby from Acton sent a letter to me, requesting aid in obtaining another dentist for the Town of Acton. I have contacted the Faculty of Dentistry and the dental supply houses in Ontario, and am optimistic that positive results will occur within the year. The present ratio of dentist to population in Acton area is approximately one to 5,000. An ideal ratio suggested by the Canadian Dental Association is one to 900 population.

## WATER FLUORIDATION

An interest in water fluoridation has been expressed by many politicians and citizens such as Mr. E. Tyler, Jr., from Acton. I have had a chemical analysis made of the Acton water, and on February 16, 1970, it showed a fluoride content of 0.1 parts per million. In order for water fluoridation to be effective, it should be raised to a level of 1.0 parts per million. If water fluoridation were brought into being, it would reduce decay by 60%, thus

preventing much pain, discomfort and expense. The cost would be somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 to 25 cents per person per year. This is approximately what two chocolate bars cost, or half a package of cigarettes. On behalf of the Halton County Health Unit, I would be very willing to sit on any committee established in those towns where the citizens wished to do a feasibility study on water fluoridation.

## FACTS REGARDING DENTAL PROGRAM

A clarification of certain facts should be made regarding the dental program in Halton County. Basically, the program consists of examination of the children's teeth for dental defects, from kindergarten through to grade four. Also, motivational education is given in dental health.

In four locations in Halton County, topical fluoride clinics are maintained for children from the ages of 3 - 12 years of age. There is no charge for this service. This year the latest concepts of preventive dentistry have been initiated. This consists of "brush-ins" where the children apply fluoride to their own teeth by brushing them in the classroom under supervision and direction.

It should be made absolutely clear that there is no treatment service offered by the Health Unit. The basic reason for this, is that the provincial government does not subsidize treatment in public health, but only prevention. We are quite aware that because of our inability to provide a treatment service, this presents a financial hardship on families in the county.

There have been excellent results from the dental program since its inception in the 50's. Each year, the Health Unit finds that the dental health status of the County is increasing by 5 - 10 per cent. This in effect is saying that by means of prevention, the citizens and taxpayers are saving somewhere up to \$300,000.00 per year in reduced dental bills. The dental budget expenditure for the Health Unit is about one tenth this figure, thus showing the excellent value received by the County for the tax dollar in health matters.

There are three dental teams in Halton County. One is assigned for the northern area, and they examine approximately 4,800 children per school year, aside from the fluoride treatments, etc. In the southern more heavily populated part of the County, there are two teams, and each team examines approximately 5,200 children. Consequently, the service rendered for North Halton County is every bit as adequate as that provided for the south.

## STATISTICAL DATA

Some people have questioned the authenticity of our dental statistics. The dental division has in operation a statistical evaluation program which was designed, created and checked for possible inaccuracies by professors in epidemiology with their masters and doctorate degrees, at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto.

The actual format on how the statistics are arrived at, has been laid down by the Provincial Health Department. This took several years of research, and are now accurate to a standard error deviation of 2.74%, which is negligible. Randomly selected children are dentally examined in detail, and the results tabulated on a mark sense card. These cards are fed to a computer at the university, and from this procedure, the health unit is able to evaluate the results of the program.

Dental statistics have to be analyzed very carefully, and it is in this regard that much confusion resulted from the report in the controversial article in January. A Physician or dentist, specializing at the university in public health, such as your Medical Officer of Health or Dental Director, must take approximately five post graduate courses in medical, dental and vital statistics, and in miometrics and epidemiology. It is therefore a person well-trained in statistics who can logically and calmly interpret the results.

If any Halton citizen is interested in obtaining more in depth analysis of these figures, it is available in the yearly report of the dental division at the Health Offices.

## INTERPRETATION

Essentially, the more interesting results of the dental program are these. If one compares the incidence of dental cavities of the children in Halton County in 1950 to that in 1969, one could see a reduction from 92 per cent to 54 per cent. That is to say, that decay is becoming less and less prevalent, but the fact still remains that 54 per cent of the children examined in Halton County last year had dental cavities of one degree or another.

Now, one might ask, how does this compare to other communities? The 54 per

cent of the children that had cavities in Halton County compares as an average to the rest of the province. In Etobicoke for example 42 per cent, and in the borough of York 46 per cent of the children had cavities in 1969. The lesser percentage is thought to be due to overall water fluoridation in these areas.

The more interesting statistic is that a breakdown of Halton County itself shows that in the northern areas, more children had cavities than in the southern areas. This, I believe, is directly related to the presence of water fluoridation in Oakville and Burlington water supplies.

In conclusion, the dental health status of Halton County is every bit as good as other areas in the province. However, we know that 98 per cent of the population will be afflicted by some form of dental disease during their lifetime, and we know that almost one half of the children are walking around with cavities in their

mouths. That is to say, they have a dental disease in their mouths.

Another revealing fact is that close to 40 per cent of the children examined last year in Halton County had never been to a dentist. This is neglect. It is the moral, legal, ethical and professional duty of this public health unit to prevent this disease if at all possible. Experts tell us that we can prevent it by up to 85 per cent and it is both my intention and that of my staff to reach this goal through prevention, education and organized community action. To attain this goal, each individual in Halton County must assume a continuing responsibility to seek proper care for themselves and their children from their private dentist, and to practise good dental health habits. There is a saying which is very applicable—"Be true to your teeth, or they will be false to you."

—Samuel M. Green D.D.S., D.D.P.H.,  
Dental Director, Halton County.

## Red hat bands on police hats

Wondering why Milton Police Officers are wearing the flashy new red hat bands? The new bands were first noticed last week and have become part of the uniform for all municipal policemen in Ontario.

Milton Chief Ray Andress noted the red band offers uniformity for municipal police officers and helps distinguish them from security men, postmen and other uniformed people who might be mistaken for police officers.

While municipal officers wear red bands, Ontario Provincial Police wear blue bands and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police wear the traditional yellow band.

## Fergus man given township position

Campbell Thompson, 26 was named the building and plumbing inspector, zoning administrator and secretary to the planning board of Nassagaweya, by township council Monday.

Mr. Thompson is married and lives in Fergus. He has been in construction with Guelph firms and has served as construction technician and estimator.

He succeeds S. W. Savage who recently resigned from the position.

## Organ recital

A new organ will be introduced at St. John's United Church, Georgetown on Tuesday March 24 when Dr. Melville Cook presents an organ recital.

Church members are selling tickets at \$2 each for the 8.15 p.m. recital. Dr. Cook has been organist and choirmaster of Metropolitan United Church in Toronto since 1967 and has performed in concerts around the world.

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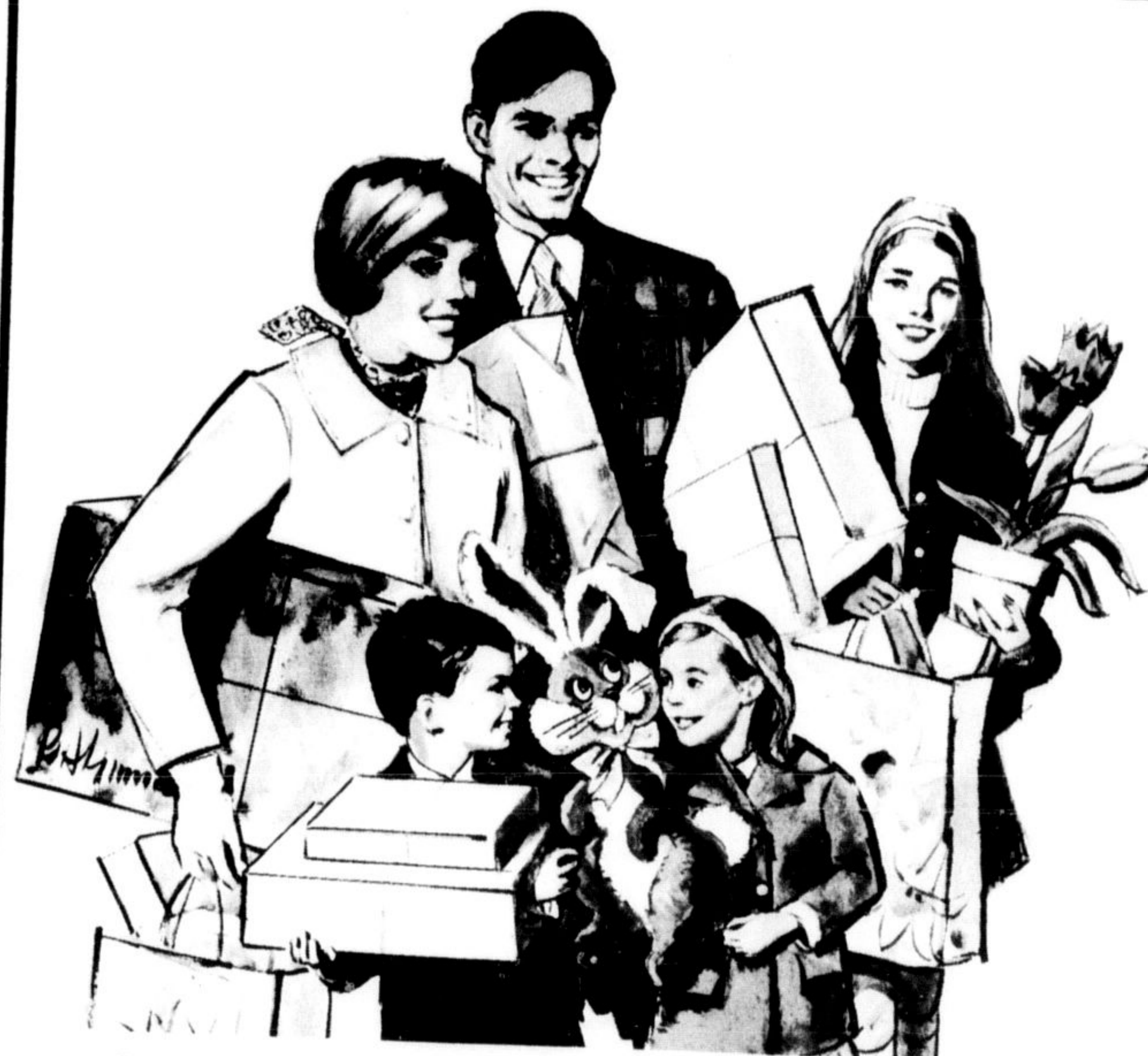
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