

Only a trio turns out for health care meeting

By **KIM ARNOTT**
Special to The Champion

Maybe it was the wind. Maybe it was apathy. Or maybe, as Halton Centre MPP Terence Young suggested, area residents just think the Ontario government is doing a great job on the health care front.

Whatever the reason, only three people turned out for a town hall meeting on health care issues organized by Mr. Young recently. Although Canadians are telling federal pollsters they are concerned about changes to health care across the country, Mr. Young said he doesn't receive many local calls on the issue. The MPP represents a portion of southern rural Milton.

"I think maybe people are giving (Oakville South MPP) Gary Carr and I the benefit of the doubt on this one," he said, as he surveyed the 150 empty seats at the Halton regional building auditorium.

Despite the small group, Mr. Young went through with his

planned presentation explaining the reasons why the Ontario Tories have made changes to the province's health care delivery system. He emphasized the government has lived up to its promise to maintain health care funding, and has, in fact, increased it from an overall budget of \$17.4 billion to \$17.7 billion this year.

"Where we haven't made reductions in spending, absolutely, is in health care," Mr. Young said.

Cuts to hospital budgets by previous governments have created an inefficient system of half-filled buildings, requiring the government to close hospitals in order to rationalize the system, Mr. Young explained. Adding the savings are being reinvested in areas where need for service is growing, such as long-term care, community-based agencies and new technologies.

Locally, Halton hospitals have benefitted from extra funding provided for institutions in growth areas, he said.

Reinvestment funding has also been provided to Halton branches of the Victorian Order of Nurses (\$187,000), the Canadian Red

Cross (\$38,000) and the Ontario March of Dimes (\$535,000), Mr. Young said.

The provincial Tories also invested \$125 million to open dialysis clinics in more than 10 communities, he added.

Cathy Hecimovich, one of the three people who showed up for the meeting, was actually hoping to gather opinions, rather than provide them. As a manager with the Halton Community Access Centre, which provides access to home-care and other community-based services, she was hoping to glean some ideas on ways the centre could better work with the public. On the whole, Ms Hecimovich said she is pleased with the changes she is seeing in health care delivery.

"It's positive that there's a reinvestment in community care," she said. "I'm feeling good about it. I'm pleased with the system and I think it is going to work better."

However, Ms Hecimovich expressed concerns about the government proposal to download responsibility for public health programs to the municipalities.

Crown protects our unity

By **MERLE LANGERYT**
Special to The Champion

The Queen as Canada's head of state may be more important than ever in these times of unity debates and cultural influences, according to the Monarchist League of Canada.

"The monarchy guarantees the personal rights of individuals and stands for the 'we' in unity," said John Aimers, dominion chairman of the organization. "When we're fighting over what are sometimes petty things, we have to realize that most of the world doesn't enjoy the same freedoms we do."

Mr. Aimers' comments were made at a special meeting of the league held at the Oakville Public Library recently in honor of Lady Teviot. A genealogist and wife of a member of the British House of Lords she is on tour to discuss the role of the Royal House in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aimers himself had just completed a tour of seven western cities in eight days to talk about the league and its goals.

"There was a very positive response from the media as well as the membership," Mr. Aimers said.

The league was formed in 1970 to promote a better understanding of the constitutional monarchy within Canada and now boasts approximately 16,000 members in 30 chapters across the country.

The group has initiated two new educational programs in the last year, including an information package geared to students in grades 4 - 10, as well as their own web page (<http://www.monarchist.ca>). Results have been favourable so far, according to Mr. Aimers.

"Although it's not a particularly emotional reaction, young people are loyal to the crown as a proud boast of Canadian identity," Mr. Aimers said. "It sets us apart from American influences."

The league asserts that the monarchy and its institutions have helped shape a distinct Canadian identity that can resist American social, cultural and economic inducements.

"In the United States you swear allegiance to the state," Mr. Aimers said. "In Canada, it's a more personal call of allegiance. We're a quieter, gentler nation."

The Queen will be visiting several Canadian cities this summer, which will also mark 500 years of monarchy in Canada.

"I don't like to call it a visit or a tour," Mr. Aimers said. "It's really a homecoming."

Those interested in the League can call John Aimers at (416) 975-2608.

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