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A Metroland Community Newspaper

Vol. 140 No. 94

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

44 Pages

\$1.00 (GST included)



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## ✓ Piggyback slide

Two-year-old Cassandra Patton screams in delight as she slides down a Sixteen Mile Creek hill on the back of dad Derek Saturday morning.

# Halton seniors facing housing crunch: report

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Homelessness has begun tarnishing the golden years of Halton senior citizens.

They're facing an increasingly precarious future due to a dearth of affordable housing, long-term-care beds and emergency shelters, said the chair of Halton's Elderly Services Advisory Committee (ESAC), Dr. Lloyd Gesner.

And an aging population means the demand will keep growing, Dr. Gesner told the Region's health and social services committee last Tuesday.

"The data says the senior population in Halton will increase," he said. "It says it will be poorer."

According to an ESAC interim report on the issue, about 50 Halton seniors, relying on shelters or unsuitable lodging with fam-

**"The concept is relative homelessness, or seniors living in spaces where they are at risk."**

**DR. LLOYD GESNER**

ily or friends, have no permanent home.

But many more are at risk of being unable to find proper shelter.

Currently, 868 seniors are waiting for subsidized housing and 287 are lined up for supportive housing. Another 600 are on a waiting list to get into a long-term-care facility.

"The concept is relative homelessness," explained Dr. Gesner, "or seniors living in spaces where they are at risk."

A number of circumstances can conspire to make seniors vulnerable in their own homes.

They include living with no income due to immigration sponsorship, or a meager

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## Rocket engine set off under portable

An 11-year-old boy is believed to be responsible for igniting a model rocket engine underneath an Our Lady of Victory School portable over the weekend of January 29 and 30.

Minimal damage was caused to the portable.

School officials contacted Halton Regional Police at 7:45 a.m. Thursday after being informed about the incident.

A search of the school revealed no other engines or incendiary devices.

The student was turned over to his parents. Under the Young Offenders Act, the boy cannot be charged at age 11.

Smoke was visible when the fire department arrived on scene. Three stations were called to fight the blaze that melted a computer terminal and caused smoke damage.

There were no working smoke alarms.

"I can't stress (enough) the importance of working smoke alarms in every sleeping area, especially in a basement where there is usually one exit. (If it is blocked), the chances of escape are minimal."

• see ONE on page 9

**"The vast majority of the houses we go into don't have working smoke alarms."**

**CAPTAIN MARK CROSS**

The first fire occurred in a basement bedroom at a townhouse unit at 551 Commercial St. January 28.

## No working smoke alarms at two homes damaged by fire

By LISA CARTWRIGHT

The Champion

Smoke alarms at two homes in which fires recently broke out weren't working, said a fire department spokesman.

"The vast majority of the houses we go into don't have working smoke alarms," said Captain Mark Cross of the Milton Fire Department. "This is a very disheartening trend."

### TIP OF THE MONTH: Does Your Pet Have Healthy Teeth; and Why You Should Be Concerned?

Periodontal "gum" disease is one of the most common health problems seen by veterinarians. In fact 85 to 90 percent of all dogs and cats over six years of age have periodontal (gum) disease. The signs of periodontal disease are bad breath, bleeding, inflamed or receded gums, infection, changes in appetite, difficulty chewing or tooth loss. Periodontal disease can be painful and can contribute to kidney, liver and heart disease. If you have noticed any of these signs, schedule a consultation for your pet. Because pets do not care for their teeth the way people do, dental problems can be extremely severe and life threatening. Fortunately most dental problems can be prevented or if they develop they can be treated by your veterinarian.

Remember Pets have teeth too!

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