



COMMENT



THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

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Classified: 905-875-3300

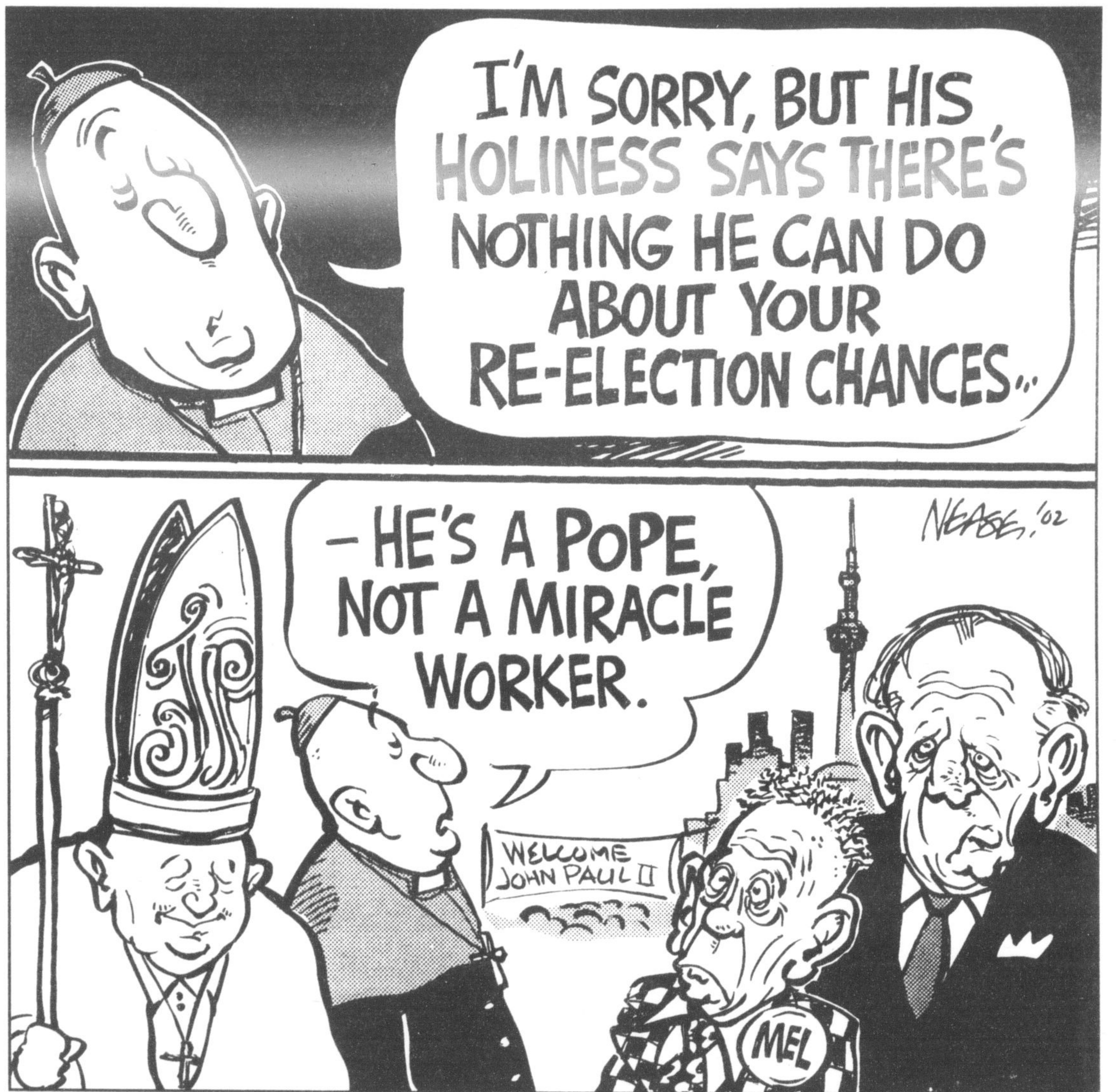
Circulation: 905-878-5947

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Bush parties today are more dangerous

Summer is a time for parties and no one enjoys a good party more than a teenager. They're a rite of growing up, but along with the fun there's the potential for danger.

That's why the Halton Regional Health Department has teamed up with Halton Regional Police and the two local school boards to promote their opposition to summertime bush parties.

Bush parties today are not like the ones parents might remember attending in their younger days.

According to the health department, these modern-day bashes allow for easier access to illegal drugs like ecstasy, criminal or gang activity and a higher risk of sexual assault.

Simply put, there's far less control at bush parties than at typical house parties and, therefore, the potential for trouble greatly increases.

According to the 2001 Ontario Student Drug Survey, which collected data from students in grades 7 to 13, 14 per cent of bush party-goers used ecstasy. When it came to hallucinogens, 23 per cent of bush party-goers admitted to using the illegal drugs.

Parents are urged to assume the responsibility for the health and safety of their children by asking them the tough questions and giving them all the information they need to make informed decisions.

OUR READERS WRITE

Is it so hard to keep your trash inside your car until you can dispose of it intelligently?: reader

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest the editorial column by Karen Smith in the July 12 issue of The Canadian Champion regarding illegal dumping.

The article addresses the abhorrent practice of some real low life people — who stoop to such obscene and thoughtless acts. But I'm also very upset with a much larger number of the motoring public who feel that the antiseptic atmosphere of their automobile must not be the temporary home of

coffee cups, plastic water bottles and fast food packaging, including milk shake containers. As soon as they're finished, out the window she goes.

The attitude seems to convey the message that the environment is their personal garbage dump. Littering should be a very serious offence and anyone caught doing so should also have a sanity check. No matter how small the item, when it's multiplied by the huge number of these nitwits the amount of roadside trash becomes appalling.

To those of you who indulge in this childish behaviour, is it such a chore to keep your crap inside your vehicle until you can dispose of it intelligently?

Do you suppose Tim Hortons (and the likes) could be encouraged to pay a penny per cup to the kids who return them? And the same for those insidious plastic water bottles.

Thanks for the opportunity to vent on a pet peeve.

Jack Murphy
 Wheelihan Way,
 Campbellville

Have your say. Send a letter to miltone@haltonsearch.com.

Don't panic, but pay attention to virus warnings

The West Nile Virus has landed in our very own backyard.

The Halton Region Health Department confirmed a crow from north Milton tested positive for the African-born virus last week. A crow also tested positive for the virus in Halton Hills, as did two crows in Oakville and Burlington earlier this week.

So far there have been no known human cases of the virus in Canada, but several people have contacted the virus from mosquitoes in the United States.

Last year in Halton, seven birds were confirmed to have been infected with the virus, but none of the birds were found in town. Crows and blue jays are known to carry the virus.

Halton was the fourth region in Ontario this year to detect the virus. Peel was first, then Oxford and Kent-Chatham.

So now that we know a crow found in the area was carrying the virus, should it be cause for concern? Last year, Dr. Bob Nosal, the region's medical officer of health, urged residents to remain calm and insisted there wasn't cause for panic, as is the same for the present situation.

That may be true, but how can we sit back and relax when we know the deadly virus has hit this close to home?

I haven't seen an abundance of mosquitoes this year, but I guess it doesn't take many to cause an infection.

The virus was first reported two years ago in New York City, which was believed to have caused at least 10 deaths.

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus. Mosquitoes transmit the virus after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of birds carrying the virus.



Random thoughts

with FANNIE SUNSHINE

Persons most at risk include those over the age of 50, the very young and those with weakened immune systems. Symptoms include mild fever, headache, stiff neck, muscle weakness, skin rashes and swollen lymph glands.

So in other words, people might think they have a bad case of the flu and figure they'll just suffer through it instead of seeing a doctor, a

decision that could cost you your life.

I'm not suggesting to go running to your family physician if you develop a headache. But we should pay more heed to the symptoms and take extra precautions when venturing outdoors. It doesn't hurt to be safe, right?

This would include avoiding areas with a high population of mosquitoes, wearing long sleeves, pants and a hat when outdoors in the evening or early morning and using a mosquito repellent containing the chemical DEET.

Unfortunately, it always takes something major to happen before we wake up and take notice. Although the transmission of West Nile Virus to humans is very low, it still exists. And that's enough to warrant concern.

The Halton Region Health Department is asking the public to report any sightings of dead blue jays or crows by calling (905) 825-6187.