

Report says Milton children have worst tooth decay in Halton

Non-florinated water may be partly to blame

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

Dental health in Milton is lacking compared to the rest of Halton, the regional health and social services committee heard Tuesday.

"Milton children have more decay than the others (municipalities)," said Dr. Dan Otchere, an oral health consultant hired by the Region.

"It's interesting that access to dental health care is almost equal (across the region)."

The second annual review of oral health within the region was received by the committee with no action taken.

According to the review — which surveyed 1,522 children aged 5, 7 and 9 years of age — 53 per cent of Milton children have dental decay, 6 per cent of which require urgent care.

That compares to a 49 per cent decay rate in Burlington, a 48 per cent decay rate in Halton Hills and a 42 per cent decay rate in Oakville.

The reason for the higher decay in Milton can be partially attributed to non-fluorinated drinking water, explained Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of

health. "The question that needs to be raised every so often is 'what about fluorinating that supply?' That's the challenge for this committee and council," he told the committee.

No action to fluorinate Milton's drinking water supply was formally recommended to the committee.

Milton residents in the historic part of town receive their non-fluorinated water through a series of wells at Kelso Conservation Area. Residents in the new areas of town are serviced by fluorinated water taken from Lake Ontario and treated.

But while the non-fluorinated water can lead to decay, it's also being credited for lower cases of fluorosis in Milton. Fluorosis is an excess of fluoride ingestion during the formation of teeth, which causes weaknesses in tooth enamel.

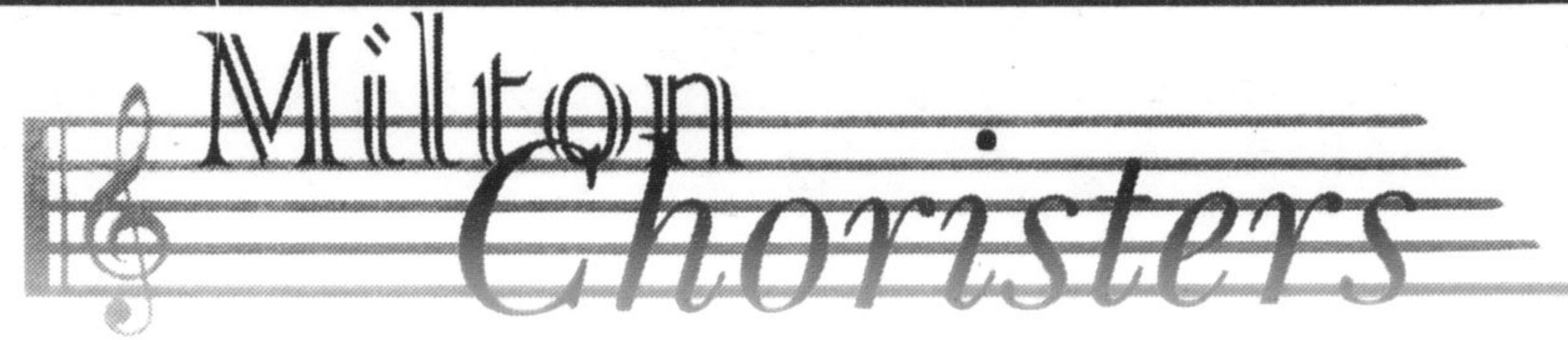
"Most of the children who have fluorosis have the mild form, which is hardly noticeable by anybody but dental care professionals," Dr. Otchere explained.

Halton Hills has the highest number of fluorosis cases with about 17 per cent, followed by Oakville and Burlington with 14 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

About 11 per cent of Milton children are believed to have fluorosis.

Fluorosis is noticeable by bright white patches on the teeth.

Information gathered from the study will be used to direct and develop educational programs geared toward dental health.



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