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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Double cohort

Grade 12 Bishop Reding Secondary School students Natalie Warr (left) and Justyna Chielewski show their mural 'overwhelmed by school'. It's one of the many art students' murals that decorate the walls of the school. See another photo in 'Arts and Entertainment' on page 16.

Region moves toward pesticides program to combat West Nile

By JASON MISNER
The Champion

Halton Region is poised to poison the breeding grounds and hangout spots of mosquitoes this summer to fight the spread of the potentially-deadly West Nile virus.

Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal said a pesticide control program needs to be in place this year to kill mosquitoes in catch basins and standing pools of water, to reduce the risk of people getting infected with the virus.

"West Nile virus, although not the number one cause, still caused a significant amount of serious illness in Halton residents last year, and we need to take it very seriously this year," he said in an interview.

Fogging is considered only as a last resort, he said.

The recommendation to use larvicides was unanimously passed by the region's health and social services committee Tuesday, and must be passed by regional council this Wednesday to become official.

Larviciding would be contracted out, but a tender hasn't been chosen yet so costs of the program haven't been released by the Region.

The West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes, which pick up the virus from infected birds and transmit it to people through bites.

There were 42 confirmed and 18 probable cases of West Nile in Halton, and of those, 16 people required hospitalization for symptoms of the virus, including speech difficulty and severe muscle weakness. None died, but many have experienced complications long after having contracted it, Dr. Nosal said.

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Merchants owner buys IceDogs

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

Mario Forgione's hockey empire is beginning to take shape.

Less than two years after buying the Milton Merchants, the Oakville native and Mississauga auto parts manufacturing magnate is set to assume ownership of the Ontario Hockey League's Mississauga IceDogs — having reached an agreement earlier this week with current owner Nick Ricci.

The deal — which was green lighted by Mississauga City Council Wednesday, but still requires OHL board of governors approval at a March 5 meeting — is believed to be in the ballpark of \$4 million.

While Mr. Forgione will be the primary owner of the IceDogs — much like he is with the Merchants — he's currently in negotiations to bring in other investors. Among his prospective partners are a number of current NHLers.

"There's a lot of interest to be part of this team," he said yesterday morning.

Owner of Depco International Inc. — which designs, engineers and manufac-

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