

Regional smoking bylaw issue to ignite next week

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

Pursuit of a Halton-wide smoking bylaw will ignite at regional council next week.

Councillors will vote if local municipalities should be able to decide if they, in principle, agree that there should be a region-wide smoking bylaw. It could become one of regional council's last fiery debates before the fall election.

Councillors Rick Malboeuf and Jeff Knoll filed an official motion with the clerks department this week to get the issue on the agenda.

The motion is based on a lot of 'ifs.'

It asks councillors if the Region should reconsider a region-wide smoking bylaw.

That would require a majority vote plus one at the regional table.

If it passes, a committee will be formed by councillors to draw up a draft smoking bylaw.

Then, three of the four municipalities would need to vote in favour — called a triple majority — of Halton pursuing a smoking bylaw.

If approved, the committee would begin to work on creating a draft bylaw, ideally with help from the local municipalities.

The draft bylaw would then be presented to regional council and, if approved, sent to local municipalities for a vote. If the municipalities voted in favour of it with a triple majority, the smoking bylaw would become official.

Currently, Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville have their own smoking bylaw, and the fact they differ from each other has prompted Mr. Malboeuf and Mr. Knoll to create a Halton-wide smoking bylaw for consistency, fairness and safety to the public.

A disappointed Mr. Malboeuf wanted to raise the motion for debate at the last regional council meeting March 26 but found out he had to register it with the clerks department prior to the meeting.

He said what needs to be made clear is that councillors next

week won't be voting for a specific region-wide bylaw, but simply to allow local municipalities to vote if they agree with it, in principle.

"Let's, at least, talk about it and get the municipalities involved," Mr. Malboeuf said.

Mr. Knoll said getting a uniform smoking bylaw in Halton — and preferably one that prohibits smoking altogether in public places and work places — has become a personal mission.

He said his mother died of lung cancer and his father suffered from a smoking-related illness that caused him to lose a leg.

Also, two of his five kids suffer from asthma and he doesn't want to see their condition exacerbated by smoking.

"I've had a terrible experience with smoking," he said. "I'm personally motivated to be on a mission to try to eliminate the chance for innocent people to be exposed to smoking."

Mr. Knoll said he receives between two to three e-mails a week from people thanking him that Oakville's bars and restaurants are smoke-free.

Jason Misner can be reached at jmisner@miltoncanadian-champion.com.

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Toronto council voting on whether to remove DSRs

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the larger issue that a consistent, uniform smoking bylaw is needed in Halton.

"It's not going to do anything to protect the health of the public." Dr. Nosal's argument is based on the fact that each of the region's four municipalities have their own smoking bylaws.

Milton and Oakville are the only two municipalities that currently don't allow smoking in bars and restaurants.

Oakville Councillor Jeff Knoll, also a regional councillor, is desperate to get a Halton-wide smoking bylaw. He said Milton would be sending the wrong public health message by allowing DSRs. It's also expensive for businesses.

"My message to Milton council is that DSRs are an expensive option for businesses," he said. "We're not seeing the mass exodus of bars and restaurants as predicted" when Oakville's bylaw started last year.

Regional Chair Joyce Savoline said allowing DSRs underscores the need for a region-wide smoking bylaw, though she'd rather see an Ontario-wide bylaw.

Toronto Councillor Joe Mihevc chairs that city's health board which has been working feverishly to get DSRs removed from restaurants. He's astonished councillors here would even consider allowing them.

"I cannot see any public policy merits for putting (a DSR bylaw) on the table," Mr. Mihevc said in an interview. "It would be totally contrary to the direction municipalities are going continent-wide, and would be a terrible step backward."

He said DSRs, allowed under a bylaw, simply aren't that popular in Toronto, with only 194 out of 6,900 restaurants having them.

Toronto council will vote on whether to remove DSRs from its smoking bylaw next week.

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No one seriously hurt in pile-up

At least 20 vehicles were involved in a pile-up on Hwy. 401 just east of Guelph Line Monday, sending four people to hospital and causing major hassles for drivers traveling along the stretch.

Port Credit OPP responded at about 3:30 p.m. to the accident, which led to the closure of Hwy. 401 westbound between Regional Road 25 and Guelph Line for about four hours.

Police are continuing to investigate the cause of the pile-up, but so far it seems blowing snow and poor visibility were to blame, combined with the speed of the vehicles involved.

Constable Bill Watts said the number of vehicles involved could be anywhere from 20 to 35.

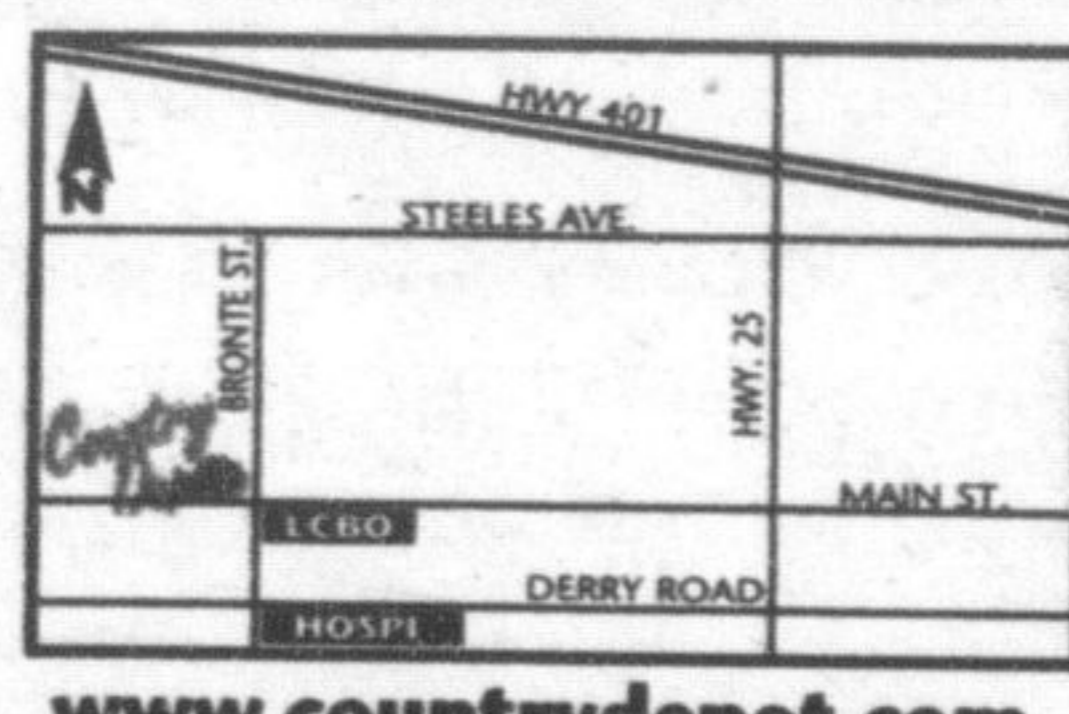
"I guess the storm appeared more suddenly than a lot of people expected, and it caught people off guard," Const. Watts said.

The four patients were treated at Milton District Hospital for minor injuries and released.

Police are asking anyone with information to call Const. Watts at (905) 278-6131.

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