

## Furik has registered

Ward 4 Councillor Ron Furik has registered to run for wards 2 and 4 regional councillor in this fall's municipal election.

He registered May 30.

Rick Malboeuf is the current wards 2 and 4 regional councillor, but won't be seeking re-election in the position

because he's running for mayor.

Those interested in running in the election for either a position of mayor, local or regional councillor, regional chair or school board trustee can contact the Town of Milton at (905) 878-7211, or visit Town Hall at 43 Brown St. for information.



The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) of Halton is now accepting applications for admission to **The Waterford**

The Community Care Access Centre has received notification that The Waterford, a new long-term care facility, is progressing in its plan to open in the fall of 2003. The Waterford is a 168-bed long-term facility located in north Oakville.

Anyone interested in applying for admission to The Waterford or any other long-term care facility, should contact the CCAC of Halton for information regarding the application process for placement.

For further information, contact:  
905-639-5228 or Toll Free by calling: 1-800-810-0000  
and ask for Information and Referral

# Lifestyles



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Part-time firefighter Chad Harper (left) and part-time district chief Ron Townsend keep busy balancing family and two jobs — including one with the local fire department.

## Part-time firefighters busy balancing jobs and family

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

*The Champion*

For some people, it's a bit of an enigma. A mystery.

Why would anyone choose a part-time job that's physically demanding, dangerous, dirty and has unpredictable hours .... in addition to a full-time job?

It's a question Milton Fire Department's central station district chief, Ron Townsend, has been asked many times.

"I've had people at work say they don't understand how I do what I do," said the part-time firefighter.

He answers the question simply and with conviction. "It gets into your blood."

Mr. Townsend is one of about 63 part-time on-call firefighters who service Milton. These paid part-time firefighters are called in addition to full-time firefighters to respond to emergency scenes as the severity of the situation requires. Each wears a pager and must respond to at least 30 per cent of the calls.

Most of the part-time firefighters also have full-time jobs. With such unpredictable hours, the balance between full-time job, part-time job, family and friends is something of an art. Balancing is a skill they either have or they don't. And the ones who don't usually leave the fire department soon after they begin.

"The guys say either 'This is me,' or they can't stand the hard, dangerous work," said Mr. Townsend, who has been a Milton part-time firefighter for 24 years.

Recruits become part-time firefighters after completing their first year of training. Since full-time positions are drawn from the pool of part-timers, some part-time firefighters try to work their way up. Others are content to stay where they are.

In Mr. Townsend's case, he said he couldn't afford to live off the salary that was paid to full-time firefighters two decades ago.

"Would I have wanted to be a full-time firefighter? It crossed my mind. But I'm happy with the way things worked out," he said.

Being a firefighter means he can provide a service to the community, said Mr. Townsend, 61, who was a full-time office worker before retiring.

Something Mr. Townsend said often makes the difference between a life-long part-time firefighter and a short-lived firefighter is a supportive family.

"It would not work without an understanding, supportive wife," he said. "Spousal/family support is absolutely necessary. There have been instances where

(firefighters) have left because of the adverse affects the job was having on their family."

Chad Harper, who has been a part-time firefighter in Milton for the past four years, agreed.

"My wife is my pillar. She absolutely makes the difference," he said.

Mr. Harper, who runs a Loblaws distribution centre full-time, said he first decided to become a firefighter when his wife became pregnant.

"I wanted to be a good dad," said Mr. Harper. "If my son was going to grow up in town, I wanted to do my part to make it better."

Family time often gets interrupted, Mr. Harper said, and that's one of the biggest challenges that comes with the job. Just last Christmas, Mr. Harper said he was eating Christmas dinner with his family when his pager sounded. It was a structure fire. Instantly, he was on his way. "Me and my partner knocked down the wall and saw the family upset and scared," he said. "We looked at the table and there was this magnificent turkey. They were just starting to eat. I thought, 'I'm glad I'm able to be here.' It was the best Christmas gift I've ever given."

Mr. Harper said he often has to find creative ways to get everything done and spend time with his three-year-old son and two-month-old daughter. So when he goes running, he takes his son in the jogging stroller. Just the other day, he found himself intermittently vacuuming and doing pushups.

Being a part-time firefighter changed his entire life, he said. Now when he goes to sleep, the pager's on, his clothes are waiting by his bed, and his truck's backed into the driveway in case of a quick exit.

The balancing act is particularly difficult with all the training required, said Milton Fire Department training co-ordinator Tim Roberts.

Once recruits are hired, they go through 11 months of intensive, twice-a-week training. After four months, they can start going on calls, but have some restrictions. Once the recruit training is done, they're fully integrated. But even then, the training continues with about 8 to 10 hours per month. The part-time firefighters are also involved with various community events throughout the year.

Mr. Roberts said the part-time firefighters deserve a lot of respect, adding "Imagine working all day and then being here at night."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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See Murray Townsend's lifestyles column on page B10.