



# Community Page

## New housing checklist aims to improve quality of life for Halton-area seniors

By **JASON MISNER**  
Special to *The Champion*

A newly-unveiled housing checklist for Halton's 40,000-plus seniors is being heralded as an effective way to help them maintain their much-valued independence and foster community spirit.

After nearly a year of dogged work sifting through piles of information, Halton's elderly services advisory committee (ESAC) has launched what it calls a housing checklist for seniors.

The unique, glossy 39-page booklet takes seniors through a host of questions to assess whether there are any safety impediments in their current housing accommodations or in a new house/apartment they're considering moving into.

The book assesses conditions in the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, balcony and laundry room.

It asks, "Do the hallways and corridors have non-slip corridors?"

"Can the laundry room accommodate a wheelchair or walker?"

"Is there a light switch just inside the doorway to the room adjoining the balcony?"

The checklist also takes the person outside of the home, taking into account neighbourhood characteristics. It asks if the person feels safe in the neighborhood or if the streets are well lit.

The intent of the checklist is to help seniors and other age groups for that matter determine if they're living in, or moving to, as safe and appropriate an environment as possible, as well as to extend the length of time they live in their home.

"They all want to stay independent in the community, everybody wants to stay in their home," said Sue Haggith, community development coordinator with Halton's social and community services department, prior to the launching of the program at Bonnie Place, a seniors' residence, on Claridge Road in Burlington.

There are accessibility checklists out there, but what ESAC wanted to do was add a social component like neighbourhood considerations, Ms Haggith added.

ESAC chair Carole Ward said in a speech to the modest crowd that the checklist "is an excellent step in helping improve the quality of life for seniors."

Quality of life is a theme regional politicians and bureaucrats have been pounding on for some



Burlington Councillor Rick Craven (right) shows a copy of the booklet 'Is Your Home Suitable for You Now and in the Future? A Housing Checklist', while residents (from left) Florence McMurich and Margaret Mitchell and ESAC member Barbara Watt look on, during the booklet's recent launch.  
Photo by RON KUZYK

time.

Adelina Urbanski, Halton's commissioner of community and social services, told the crowd that "I predict this booklet will be the stuff of legend."

In an interview afterward, she acknowledged that quality of life for seniors is critical.

"It's everything," she said.

She said part of that includes the availability of affordable housing, which she said seniors have told the Region "there isn't enough of."

She said the Region is working on that, looking into federal government programs, for example, to see what can be done.

Ms Urbanski noted the Ontario budget included a "verbal commitment" to addressing afford-

able housing but didn't provide any real detail.

"At the end of the day we'd like more units." ESAC operates on an annual budget of around \$100,000.

Jack Shirley, an 82-year-old Oakville resident and ESAC member, said he has already used the checklist and found some things in his home of 22 years he shares with his wife, that got his attention.

For example, their bathrooms don't have grab bars and there are two steps that lead to the front door.

"There's no reason we couldn't have had that with a slope," Mr. Shirley told the crowd. "(The checklist) is something that can really be helpful."

Jennifer Smith-Miller, chair of the housing checklist project, said one of the biggest challenges in producing the booklet was knowing when to stop.

"We've could have kept going and going and going," she said after the launch, with a slight laugh.

Feedback from seniors and their families and friends and the Internet were used to come up with the data. "It was a matter of finding it and pulling it together," Ms Smith-Miller said.

The checklist can also be used by developers to help them when designing homes.

To get a free copy of the checklist, call the Region at (905) 825-6000.

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**Programming Schedule - Tuesday, June 15 - Monday, June 21, 2004**

Tuesday, June 15	Wednesday, June 16	Thursday, June 17	Friday, June 18	Saturday, June 19	Sunday, June 20	Monday, June 21
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30 pm Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! Late Week Edition	4:00pm TVCogeco Sports: Flamborough Speedway Racing Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	10:30am TVCogeco Sports: Flamborough Speedway Racing Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! Late Week Edition
5:30pm Seniors Showcase	5:30pm Peoplespeak in Halton	5:30pm Election Candidate Statements	8:00pm Milton JC's Halton Candidates Meeting - June 17	7:30pm	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Be Inspired Seniors Showcase Peoplespeak in Halton Money Week Faces - Best of Faces	5:30pm Election Candidate Statements
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	6:30pm Be Inspired	6:30pm Money Week			6:30pm Seniors Showcase Peoplespeak in Halton Money Week Faces - Best of Faces	6:30pm Faces - Best of Faces
8:00pm Halton Hills Council - June 14	7:00pm SportsZone Live 8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	7:00pm Election Candidate Statements 8:00pm Main Street			7:00pm Milton JC's Halton Candidates Meeting - June 17	

**"TVCogeco's Halton Candidates Meeting - Live, Friday 8pm"**