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52 PAGES "Using Communication to Build Better Communities"



More stores selling cigarettes to minors

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**

The Champion

The number of gas bars and convenience stores willing to sell cigarettes to minors is on the rise in Halton.

Figures put forward by the Halton Region Health Department last week showed 15 per cent of gas bars checked for compliance last year using test shoppers were willing to sell tobacco to minors, up from six per cent in 2003.

At convenience stores checked, 10 per cent were ready to sell cigarettes to youths, while only three per cent fell in this category in 2003.

The health department also found last year that 40 per cent of the supermarkets surveyed in 2003 no longer sell cigarettes and fewer restaurants, bowling alleys, billiard halls, arenas and smoke shops are selling tobacco.

None of these establishments were found to be non-compliant last year, but some were willing to sell cigarettes to minors in 2003 and received warnings at the time.

"The overall non-compliance rate for all premise types was 11 per cent in 2004, as compared to seven per cent in 2003, but this difference is not statistically significant," a report from Commissioner and

Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal said.

In total, 250 out of 463 tobacco retailers in the region were surveyed last year, which is up from the 245 out of 472 checked in 2003.

Halton Environmental Health Manager Tony Amalfa explained the number of retailers that sell tobacco varies from year to year and it takes the health department a while to track down which locations are actually selling.

The number of checks done on each premise type also varied from year to year. "We set some priorities, but sometimes we just run out of time in terms of how many we actually do (check)," Mr. Amalfa said.

This year the Region plans to check all retailers that sell tobacco in Halton.

In each local municipality, the health department also broke down the numbers and compared variety store compliance rates. Oakville saw the biggest increase from year to year, going from 0 per cent in 2003 to 14 per cent in 2004 willing to sell

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Down to earth

Three-year-old Kaleigh Ryan thinks green as she takes a closer look at a growing orange sneeze-weed — a perennial noted for its bright yellow to orange daisy-like blooms — on this Earth Day.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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• FRIDAY, APRIL 22 •

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