

# OPINION

## Being pro-active benefits us all

*Halton's health department committed to tackling issues, keeping us informed*

Halton residents are fortunate to live in a community with such a pro-active health department.

Regional health officials routinely tackle issues that impact both the quality and quantity of life we enjoy.

They educate us, inform us and frequently shock us with statistics related to social, environmental and global risks to our well being. Teen suicide, West Nile virus, air quality, mould in school portables, doctor shortages, obesity, smoking bans, pandemic planning, SARS and teen drug use have all been topics Halton's health department has brought to our attention in the last five years.

Since 1990, the point man on all issues related to public health in Halton has been Dr. Bob Nosal.

While he is quick to deflect credit for Halton's successes — preferring instead to applaud his department's staff and invaluable alliances that have been forged between the health department, hospitals, local municipalities, school boards and countless regional social service agencies — Nosal has been the driving force toward improving and protecting the health of Halton's citizens.

More than a dozen years before the Ontario government banned smoking in all public indoor spaces and workplaces, Nosal was speaking out against secondhand smoke's costly impact to individuals and our health-care system.

His relentless anti-smoking message convinced councils in Milton, Burlington, Oakville and Halton Hills to enact smoking bylaws several years before the Province finally took action.

The health department has also played a significant role in making us aware of new threats that have emerged.

Thanks to more than six years of public education efforts, Halton residents probably know as much today about protecting themselves against West Nile virus as they do about protecting against the harmful effects of unprotected exposure to the sun.

Halton's health department has a simple mandate — to protect and promote health and prevent disease.

Instead of sitting idly by for direction from a higher level of government, Nosal and his staff prefer to be on the leading edge of health promotion. It is largely because of their efforts that we enjoy such a high quality of life.



## ReadersWrite

E-mail your letters to [miltone@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltone@haltonsearch.com).

### Composting doesn't take much space

DEAR EDITOR:

It was disappointing to read in the June 19 *Champion* the spokesperson for Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (P.O.W.E.R.) promoting the nonsense idea that lots of room is needed to do backyard, home-composting through her letter entitled 'GreenCart plan great for Halton'.

In actual fact, effective composters are available from the Region — at a very reasonable price — which are

about 32 inches high and less than 30 inches in diameter. Most hamlet and urban backyards I have seen could easily accommodate such a composter. People do not need to live in rural Milton, or rural Halton for that matter, to be able to effectively and efficiently home-compost.

Our family has been home-composting for over 17 years now. We do not need noxious, fume-belching

• see **CONTRARY** on page A7

## Theviewfromhere

### Ward 2 byelection not exactly democracy's finest hour

As I was writing a story this week about new Ward 2 Councillor Greg Nelson's first official council meeting, I got thinking about the number of votes it took to get him into office — 543.

When you consider that the ward actually has 7,515 registered voters, the number doesn't sound very big.

First off, I should say that I'm not trying to marginalize Nelson's win at all. I think anybody who takes the chance and runs for office should be commended.

My point is more about the extremely low number of voters who exercised their democratic right to vote in the June 14 byelection.

By the end of the night, only 1,568 residents — or 20.86 per cent — had cast ballots. This means one out of every five voters hit the polling stations.

Considering that in the November munic-

ipal election almost 40 per cent of Ward 2 residents got out to vote, I was very surprised by the low turnout this time around.

Maybe there's less interest in byelections. Maybe people's attention has already turned to summer vacations. Maybe they don't think their vote will make a difference.

Regardless of the reason, it's obvious something needs to be done to get people more interested and involved in the political process.

I think a lot of people simply don't realize how their local council's decisions hugely impact their day-to-day lives. They're the ones who decide which roads get paved and when. They're the ones who approve your local property tax rates and increases. And

they're the ones who give the go-ahead to new developments.

With that said, I think it's pretty obvious that picking the right candidate to have in your corner on council is crucial. This leaves me all the more puzzled that most people don't seem to care who's making important choices for them.

But local residents will soon have a chance to redeem themselves with the upcoming provincial election and a prob-

able federal election. As someone who covers politics at all levels, I can't emphasize enough the importance of taking the time to vote.

It only takes a minute to cast a ballot, but it makes a difference for years to come.



Melanie Hennessey

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