

# OPINION

## Banning Pullman

With its recent ban of *The Golden Compass*, the Halton Catholic District School Board is earning itself a reputation as a reactionary organization.

Its first move in this direction was pulling out of the Halton Campus plan because trustees didn't want to share the same facilities as other non-Catholic groups — the Halton District School Board, Halton Regional Police Service and Halton Region.

That move contradicted the wishes of many of the board's own school communities and put it in a difficult position where some of its administrative buildings are literally falling apart and there's no provincial funding available to replace them.

Next, trustees decided to pull Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* from elementary library book shelves following a complaint about the author's atheist viewpoints.

The book was initially removed pending a report from the board's own book review committee, but was permanently banned recently, despite the review committee's recommendation to keep it in school libraries.

The ban also went against the wishes of Milton Trustee Rev. David Wilhelm, who argued the controversy was actually drawing more attention to the book.

Indeed, *The Golden Compass* had been on the board's elementary library shelves for 12 years without controversy, before publicity over a new movie based on the book prompted its removal.

It's not far-fetched to imagine some youths are now reading the book out of curiosity or rebelliousness and may never have heard of it prior to the school board's ban.

Ironically, by banning the book the board is actually behaving much like the protagonists Pullman writes about in *The Golden Compass* — they're repressing free speech and arguments opposed to their doctrine.

Pullman isn't against the values of Christianity (or for that matter other religions), so much as he opposes the dogma and authoritarian control exercised by many organized religions.

The Halton Catholic trustees should have considered this before they imposed a ban on *The Golden Compass* and the rest of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy.

While the Catholic board trustees feel they have acted in a responsible manner, their actions have probably attracted more attention to the book than existed before.

Ironically, trustees may eventually end up wishing they had exhibited a little more faith in the faith of their young students.



## ReadersWrite

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

### Officer's aid was truly a godsend

DEAR EDITOR:

On the morning of December 22, an off-duty police officer came to the aid of my brother — a Milton resident — at Milton Mall.

Ron was trying to enter Shoppers Drug Mart, but was having difficulty opening the door. The officer recognized something was very wrong and was quick-thinking enough to call 911.

My brother indeed was in difficulty — he was having a stroke.

Because of the officer's kind assistance, my brother was rushed by ambulance and admitted to the stroke centre

at Trillium Hospital in Mississauga.

There he was treated with a drug that can be very beneficial, but must be administered within a short period of time after a stroke. Because of the quick and compassionate actions on the part of this officer, my brother received the necessary medical attention within this period of time.

I'd like this officer to know just how extremely grateful we are for his help and caring. God bless you and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

MARGO BRICKELL  
MISSISSAUGA

## The view from here

### Top town council news events of 2007 were...

Looking back over the town council stories I wrote throughout 2007, I think it's safe to say that last year was full of both excitement and challenging decisions for our local politicians.

Here, in no particular order, are my top five picks for what made the biggest town council headlines:

**Proposed street name changes** — Local residents came out in full force against the proposal, which aims to remove duplicate or similar street names and out-of-sequence numbers that currently exist to ensure emergency vehicles are dispatched to the right places. Council is expected to make a final decision on the issue next month.

**Power plant** — Ward 1 Councillor Rick Day pushed hard for the Town to conduct its own review of an environmental report on TransCanada Energy's (TCE) power plant

planned for Steeles Avenue, just west of Sixth Line. His motion ultimately lost in a tie, but council did support a resolution that asked for the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) to 'bump up,' or elevate, TCE's applications to require an individual environmental assessment.

**Ward 2 byelection** — Greg Nelson was elected to council in June following a close race with former councillor John Challinor. The byelection was held after Mark Curtis announced his resignation from council to pursue a career as a justice of the peace.

**Rural high-speed Internet** — Rural Miltonians celebrated when the Town was awarded a provincial grant to cover up to one-third of the costs (to a maximum of \$1

million) associated with putting high-speed Internet in the rural area. Barrett Xplore has been selected as the service provider. Construction of the high-speed network must be completed by this June, as per the provincial grant guidelines.

**New Town facilities** — Ground broke in May for the much-discussed Town Hall expansion, which will see a 50,000-square-foot, two-storey addition put onto the historic downtown building. Plans are also rolling along for the new branch of the Milton Public Library that will be built on Fourth Line between Hearst and Clark boulevards. Council has approved a concept design for the building, with construction expected to get underway in March.



Melanie Hennessey

The Canadian Champion  
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555 Industrial Dr.,  
Milton, Ont. L9T 5E1

905-878-2341

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