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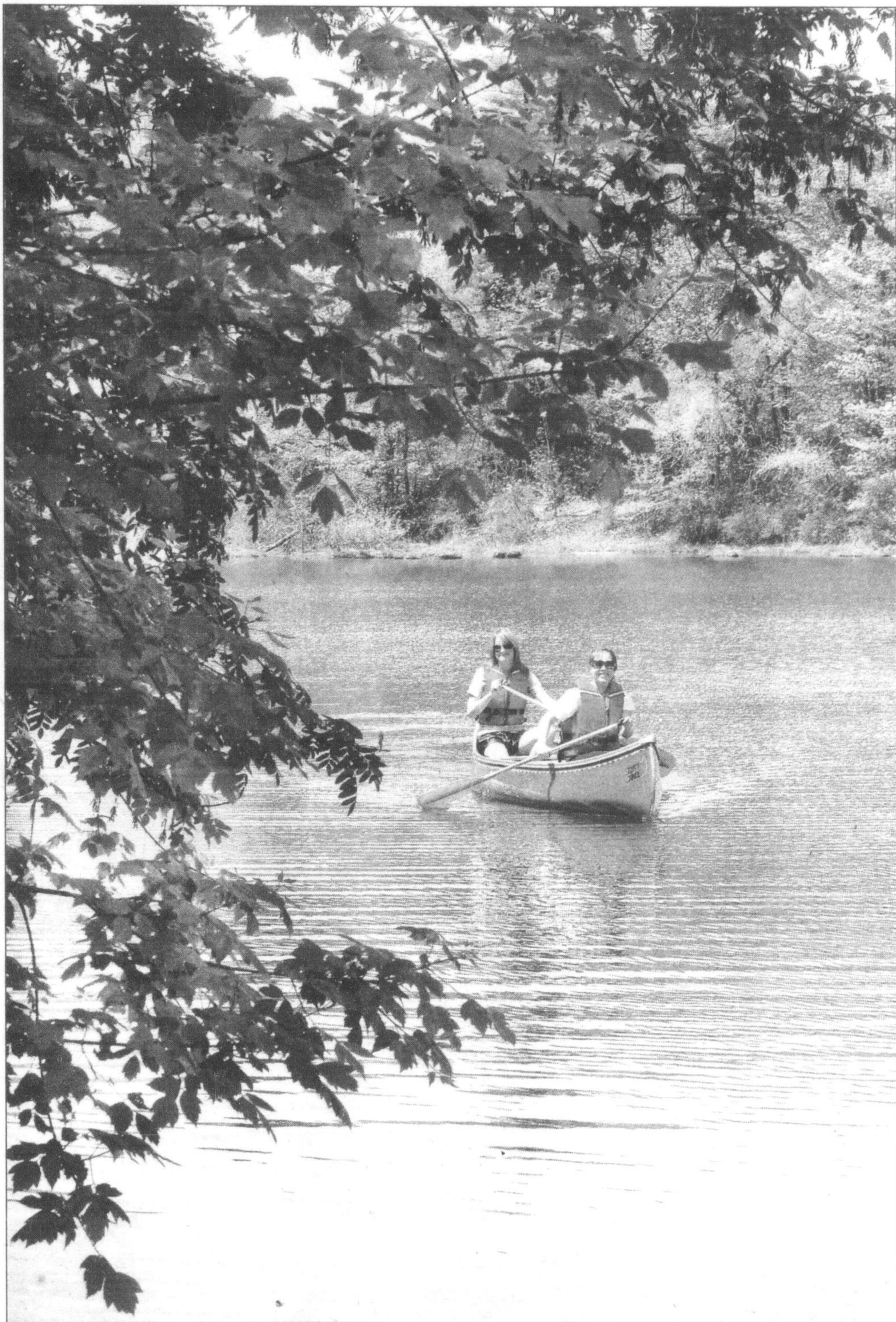
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A Metroland Media Group publication • Vol. 149 No. 20

Friday, May 16, 2008

68 Pages • \$1.00 (incl. G.S.T.)



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT: Grade 11 E.C. Drury High School outdoor education students practise their canoeing skills at the Mill Pond in preparation for their trip to Algonquin Park next week. Here, Taylor Musclow (front) and Jessica Liske paddle back to shore to switch with fellow students.

Hospital steps up to prevent infection

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

While C. difficile outbreaks are making headlines across the province these days, the Milton District Hospital (MDH) is taking several proactive steps to keep the infection in check.

MDH, along with the other hospitals under the Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) umbrella, have implemented additional control, monitoring and surveillance measures to help reduce the risk of infection among patients.

For example, the hospital has:

- Implemented more aggressive environmental cleaning processes and products
- Introduced a specialized team to perform isolation room cleaning
- Increased the number of house cleaning staff to ensure rooms are being thoroughly cleaned between patients
- Held education sessions for staff, physicians and volunteers that focus on early identification, treatment and prevention
- Increased the number of hand wash stations

"Most importantly, we continue reinforcing the importance of good hand hygiene for staff, physicians, patients and visitors," said HHS spokesperson Trish Carlton. "As a hospital, the health and safety of our patients is so important."

There have only been a couple sporadic cases of C. difficile at MDH this year — one in February and one in April, said Carlton. But she said HHS isn't releasing statistics on the number of deaths that have occurred in its facilities as a result of C. difficile due to a lack of provincial standardized reporting criteria for the data.

According to the HHS website, all three of its hospitals — Milton, Georgetown and Oakville — had cases of C. difficile in 2007, but they remained below the provincial average

of 5.5 cases per 1,000 admissions.

Carlton said HHS staff has weekly meetings regarding C. difficile to monitor incidence rates at all three hospitals and share information on the control measures that are taking place.

C. difficile is one of the many types of bacteria that can be found in feces. It can also cause infection, with symptoms like diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis. It's one of the most common infections found in hospitals and long-term care facilities and can be transferred to surfaces such as bed rails and phone handles through hand-to-mouth contact.

At greatest risk of C. difficile are seniors and people who have other illnesses or conditions being treated with antibiotics and certain other stomach medications.

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