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Connection
November '08

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Air Quality: Working together, we can make a difference



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

Air quality is an issue that is important to all residents of Halton. Halton Regional Council has taken proactive measures to assess our Air Quality and to initiate programs aimed at improving air quality.

While air quality is worse during smog advisories, poor air quality across southern Ontario presents a risk to our health year round. Air pollution affects everyone, however children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing heart and breathing conditions are most sensitive.

What can we do to lessen the impact of air pollution in our Region? To start, we need to understand the source of the problem. There are five key sources of air pollution in Halton. These are:

- Emissions from beyond our borders in the United States.
- Transportation emissions such as the cars and trucks on our roadways.
- Electricity and heat from our homes and workplaces.
- Industrial and commercial sources.
- Open sources such as road dust and the use of common chemicals.

While there is little we can do to reduce pollutants that are generated elsewhere, there is much that we can do about the emission sources within our own community if we all pull together. Halton Region has established an ambitious program that aims to reduce air emissions and protect the health of the citizens of Halton.

The program includes four key areas.

1. Evaluating how air quality varies from one part of the Region to another. Airshed modelling, will be used to evaluate the impact of options such as public transit, cycling paths and highways on air quality and our health.
2. Air monitoring, both portable and stationary, that will help us develop the policies needed to protect citizens from air pollution. For example, air monitoring beside a highway may help us to know the safe distance to build homes away from highways to protect residents from high levels of air pollution.

The Region has already installed a stationary air monitoring station in Milton. It will provide us with an understanding of air quality in north Halton. By keeping the station in one place, we can see how air quality changes over time as the community grows. This station provides residents in Milton and Halton Hills with daily information about air quality using the newly developed Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) system, found at www.halton.ca/airquality. It also gives residents and schools access to real-time data on a daily basis for the five common air pollutants.

3. Regional policy development to make our communities more walking and transit friendly. Communities that encourage healthy lifestyles can directly contribute to reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

4. Education programs that aim to shift attitudes and behaviour towards more efficient energy use at home, in our workplaces, and on the roads.

These are the activities we, as your regional government, are undertaking to enhance Halton's air quality. What can you do to make a difference?

First of all, check air quality levels using the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) to make decisions to protect your health when air quality is particularly poor.

Leave your car at home. Walk, bike, or use public transit if available instead of driving to work or school. It's not only good for the environment, it's healthier for you!

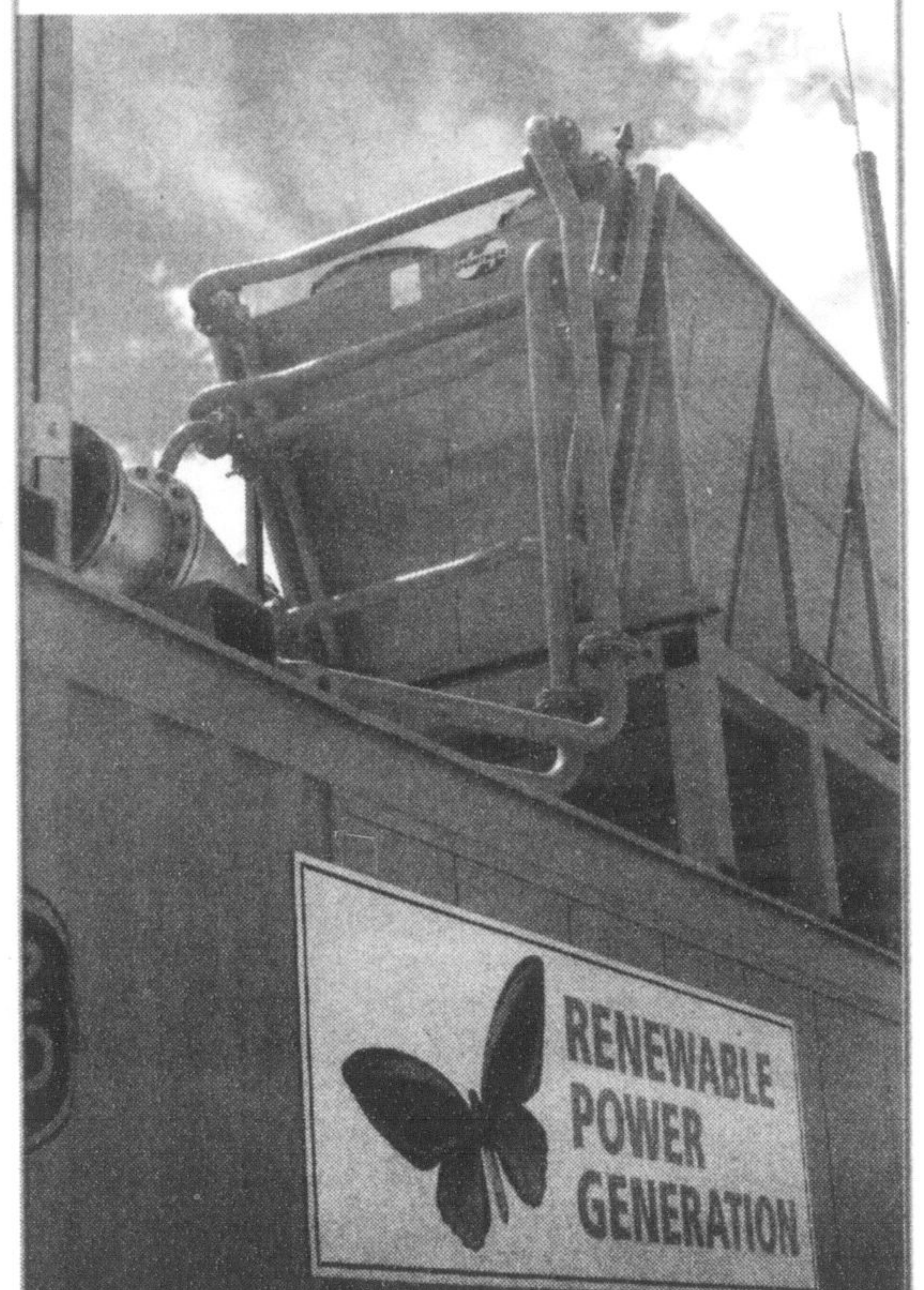
Travel wisely. Drive an energy-efficient vehicle or consider car pooling. Some businesses offer preferential parking for people who car pool. Plus you can take advantage of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on some provincial highways reserved for vehicles carrying at least two people.

Use less energy at home. Try to use energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances. Turn off appliances when not in use. Lower your thermostat. All of these will reduce your impact on air quality and the climate and save you money too!

Working together, we can enhance air quality, improve our health, and support a healthy and sustainable future. To learn more about what makes a healthy and sustainable community, visit www.halton.ca/airquality.

Other Regional Environmental Initiatives:

- The **Take It Back!** Halton and the GreenCart organics collection program.
- The use of LED technology for all Traffic and Pedestrian Signals.
- The Landfill Gas Capture project, which converts methane gases emitted from the landfill into a useable energy source used to heat homes. Watch a video about this project at www.halton.ca/landfillgas.
- Green Fleet initiatives that include the use of Bio-Diesel fuel and hybrid vehicles for specific applications.



The Landfill Gas Capture project at the Halton Region Waste Management Site

November Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

- Nov. 12, 9:30 a.m.** Planning & Public Works Cte
- Nov. 12, 1:30 p.m.** Administration & Finance Cte
- Nov. 13, 1:30 p.m.** Health & Social Services Cte
- Nov. 18, 7:00 p.m.** Special Meeting of the Health & Social Services Cte
- Nov. 19, 9:30 a.m.** Regional Council Meeting

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905-825-6000 • Toll free: 1-866-442-5866 • TTY: 905-827-9833 • www.halton.ca
The Regional Municipality of Halton • 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville, Ontario L6M 3L1