

OPINION

Obesity factors very complex

When are we going to get the message?

Yet another report on Canadian obesity rates was released last week. To no one's surprise, the findings highlighted what we all know: physical activity and improved diet significantly reduce the incidence of obesity.

The comprehensive report, a joint effort by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), states that eliminating physical inactivity, which is defined as less than 15 minutes of low-impact activity a day, could avert the equivalent of 646,000 cases of obesity in women and 405,000 cases in men.

The report goes on to note that increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables we eat — presumably in the place of high-fat, high-calorie choices — could decrease the cases of obesity in men by 265,000 and by 97,000 in women.

In short, we need to eat better and move more — something we all know.

Interestingly, however, the 52-page document (available at www.cihi.ca), titled Obesity in Canada, breaks down the numbers across the country by various factors, including sex, age, geographic region and cultural and economic background. In Halton, the prevalence of obesity sits at 16.3 per cent — right on target with the rest of the country, which has shown a steady increase in measured obesity rate over the past three decades, from about 14 per cent in 1978 to just more than 25 per cent in 2002.

Other notable findings:

- Based on measured height and weight, more than one in four adults in Canada, and just less than one in 11 children, are obese.

- Between 1981 and 2009, obesity rates at least doubled across all age groups, tripling for youths aged 12 to 17 years.

- Obesity varies substantially by geographic area. Across Canadian health regions, there's a six-fold difference in obesity rates.

- Women in higher income brackets were significantly less likely to be obese than their lower-income counterparts, a trend most pronounced among Aboriginal females.

Obesity in Canada stresses that the causes of and contributors to obesity are complex and include not only individual lifestyle choices and genetic disposition, but also social determinants and other underlying factors. It also notes that many of the physical and psychological factors may begin in childhood. Further, it found that many Canadians get less than the daily, recommended amount of physical activity for their age group, notably, that 88 per cent of children and youth aged 5 to 19 years didn't meet the guidelines of Canada's Physical Activity Guide.

Combine this trend with increased sedentary behaviours and you have a deadly recipe for a host of chronic conditions such as Type II diabetes, hypertension and some forms of cancers.

Ultimately, the Obesity in Canada report aims to develop strategies to address the country's ever-increasing battle of the bulge, and is well worth reading.

However, we all know what we should be doing. We're just not doing it.



ReadersWrite

Email letters to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Letters, which may be edited, must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

No tax dollars should be spent on restoring church

DEAR EDITOR:

Kenneth Simmons' letter published last Tuesday suggested that no tax dollars should be spent on restoring St. Paul's United Church.

He was right, and at no time was such a suggestion made.

However, those citizens from the community who value Milton's heritage will hopefully want to support the membership's decision to preserve and restore this wonderful heritage structure:

- That helps define the historical downtown area

- That has been used for large community gatherings in war and peace

- That's a strong reminder of Christian heritage and outreach

- That has magnificent acoustics shared in countless public performances

- That's a beacon of faith and centre for worship.

I have great faith in the spirit and generosity of the people of Milton to help when help is needed.

THEO WOLDER
MILTON

Transport reserve fund better idea

DEAR EDITOR:

Councillor Rick Malboeuf's letter last Thursday highlighted the extravagant expenditure on public transit in Milton despite the fact there's little or no demand for it beyond peak hours.

While many will agree that service should be restricted, I can't endorse his suggestion that the savings should

be spent elsewhere.

Instead, if service is restricted the dollars saved should be earmarked toward a transit reserve fund that could be tapped into when the demand improves many years from now.

DOUG DEANS
MILTON

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555 Industrial Dr.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 5E1

905-878-2341

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