

Halton Region may seek smoking ban at parks

By Tim Foran
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

A Halton regional councillor has floated the idea of a ban on smoking on public properties including municipal and conservation authority parks.

Burlington's Ward 5 Councillor Rick Goldring made a motion at Halton's health committee Tuesday that would have directed public health staff to investigate the ban. However, the committee voted to first send the motion out to the lower tier municipalities and conservation authorities for feedback, as they have responsibility for parks.

Regional council can endorse the recommendation at its meeting this Wednesday.

During discussion of Goldring's motion, Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr said it's important for municipalities to understand the Region isn't trying to interfere with local municipal matters but that it has a responsibility for health promotion as part of its public health mandate.

"The single best thing we can do to reduce cancer is to eliminate smoking," he said.

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton questioned why then the Region doesn't ban the sale of all tobacco products in Halton.

Carr responded he believes the Region's legal counsel would say that's not possible.

"How do we know that?" asked Burton, though he didn't push the matter any further.

Goldring's motion followed the committee's discussion of the most recent cancer

incidence and mortality rates for Halton, and the part played by tobacco use.

Those 2000-04 statistics reveal, despite the region having lower incidence and mortality rates than the provincial average, lung cancer continues to be the third most common cancer in both Halton males and females and the number one cancer killer. Both rates have declined significantly for males but have been on the increase for females in Halton and Ontario since 1986.

Halton regional council has already endorsed one smoking ban this year. In April, council voted to ban smoking within nine metres of the approximately 150 municipally-owned properties in Halton including civic centres, libraries, public arenas, pools and sports centres.

Before that ban will take effect, it first requires consent from councils at three of the four lower-tier municipalities. Oakville and Burlington have already passed resolutions endorsing the ban, however, councils in Milton and Halton Hills haven't yet addressed the matter.

Milton's administration and finance committee will review the proposed ban October 19, while Halton Hills' corporate affairs committee will discuss it October 20. If councils at either of the two municipalities endorse the ban, it will come into effect about three months later. The Region's public health inspectors or police can enforce the ban.

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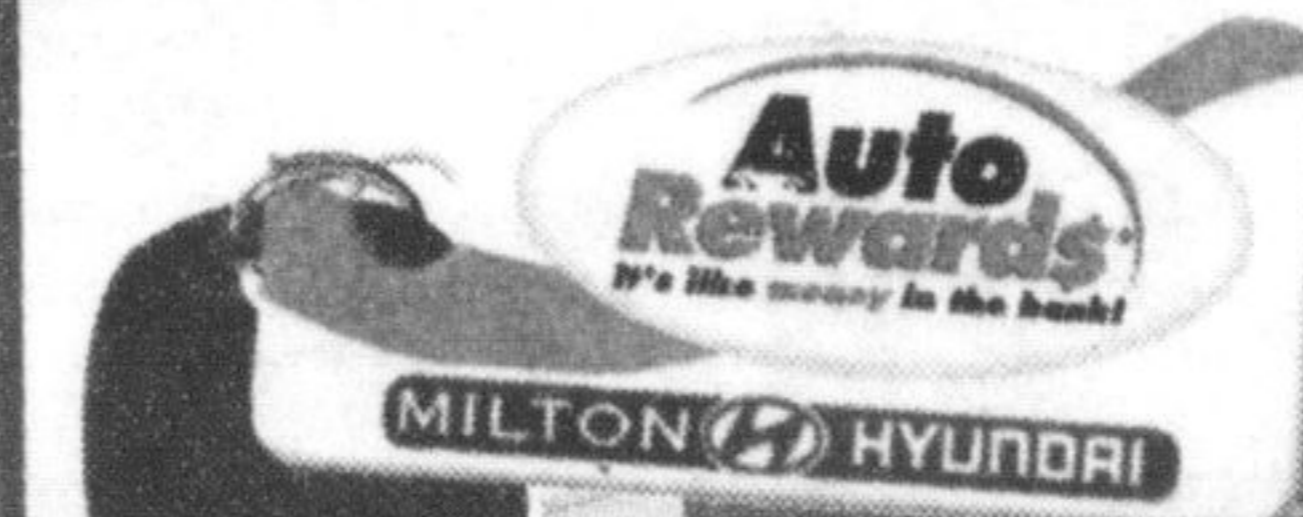
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