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## CH parks' attendance climbs

By Melanie Hennessey  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

More and more people are discovering Conservation Halton's (CH) parks, with the authority reporting a significant increase in visitors to its conservation areas last year.

According to CH, attendance levels at the six local conservation areas climbed from 409,519 in 2008 to 476,027 last year.

Annual pass sales also rose from around 3,100 in 2008 to 4,315 last year.

"Conservation Halton enjoyed record-breaking success on a number of fronts this past year," said CH chairman Brian Penman in a presentation at the recent inaugural board meeting.

"What makes this more impressive is our country and province are dealing with some of the most challenging economic times we've experienced in recent memory."

Visitors to CH's Glen Eden Ski and Snowboard Centre rose slightly from 183,573 in 2008 to 189,806 in 2009, and the authority's staff is projecting that this number will hit well over 200,000 this year.

The number of ski passes sold so far this season has more than doubled from last year, going from around 3,000 to 6,000.

"This ski season has been amazing," said Hassaan Basit, CH's director of communications services. "People are realizing they don't have to drive up north to ski."

In addition to drawing Miltonians to the ski and snowboard centre, Basit said they've seen an increase in the number of people coming from Mississauga and Oakville.

There's also been a jump in the number of children who participated in outdoor education programs at CH's conservation areas, going from 61,751 in 2008 to nearly 70,000 last year.

"One of the most rewarding areas of growth in our organization is the number of children who've had the opportunity to learn about nature through our education programs," said Penman.

More statistics were recently released by CH in its Public Accountability Report 2009, which provides a snapshot of the organization's programs and services from 2006 to 2008.

The report documented the public's involvement with CH, showing the number of people who attended the authority's public meetings increased significantly from 200 individuals at seven sessions in 2007 to 535 people at four meetings in 2008.

Basit attributed the increase to the master planning process CH held for its parks.

There were also 1,688 volunteers who helped out with the authority's programs in 2008.

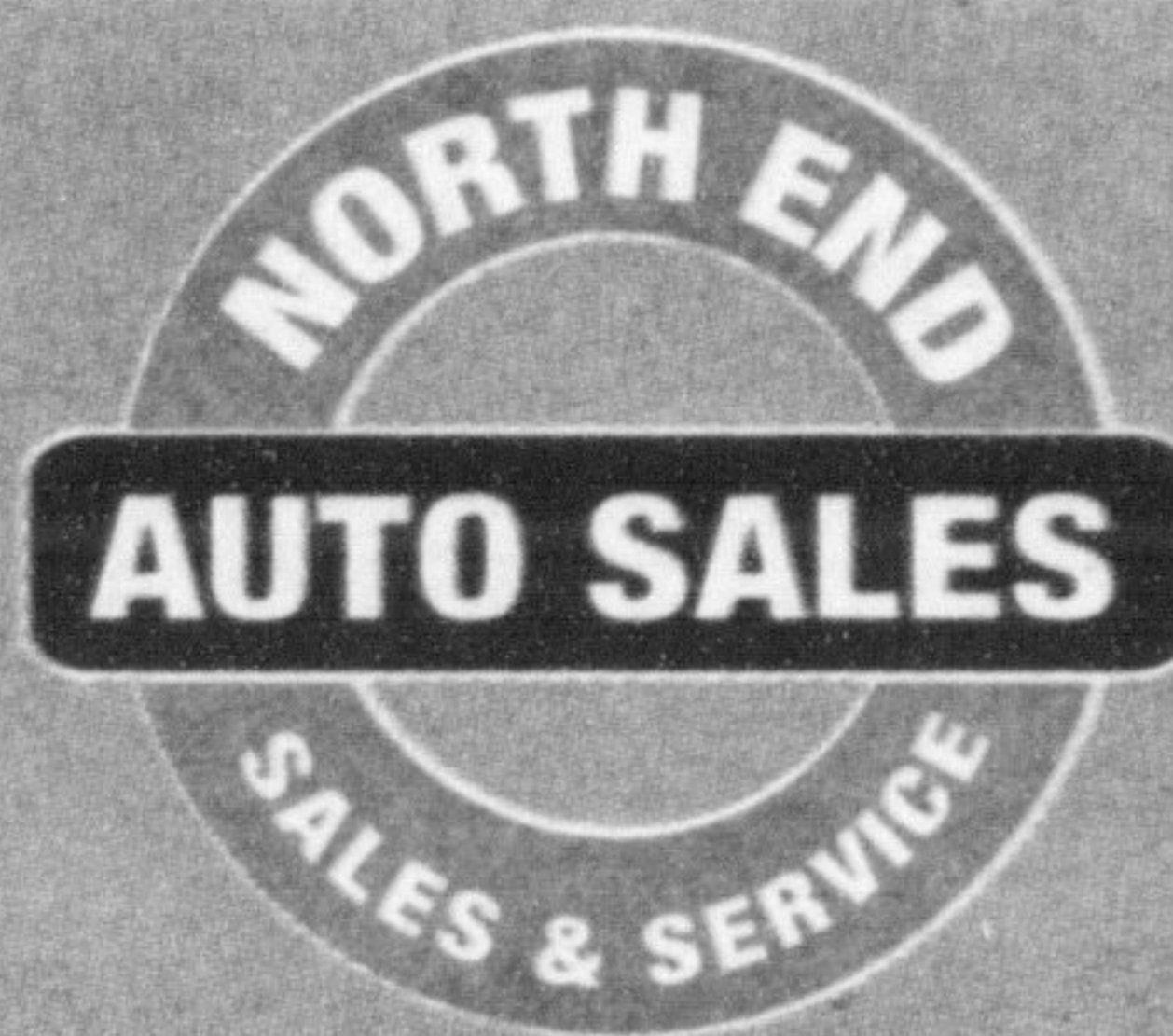
The report goes on to detail other aspects of CH's responsibilities, such as ensuring the well being of the environment in the face of development.

While Halton's building boom has kept the authority's staff extremely busy in past years with planning and development-related matters, the report showed these numbers have declined.

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# GRAND

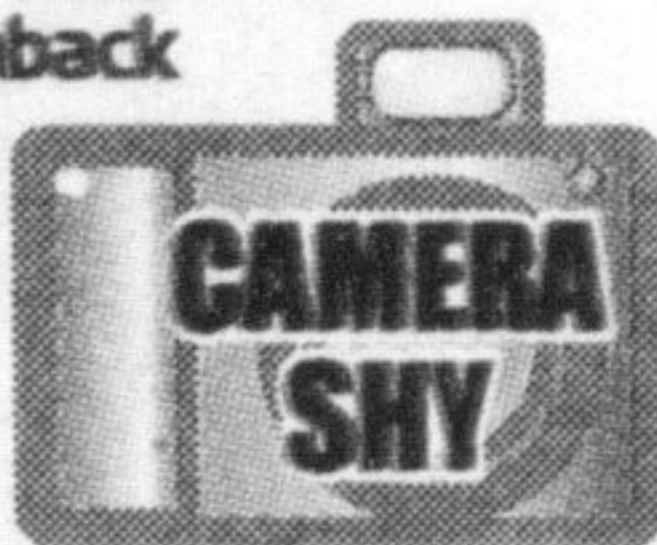
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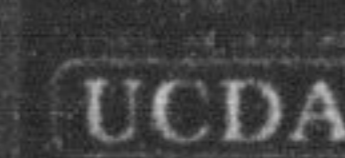
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