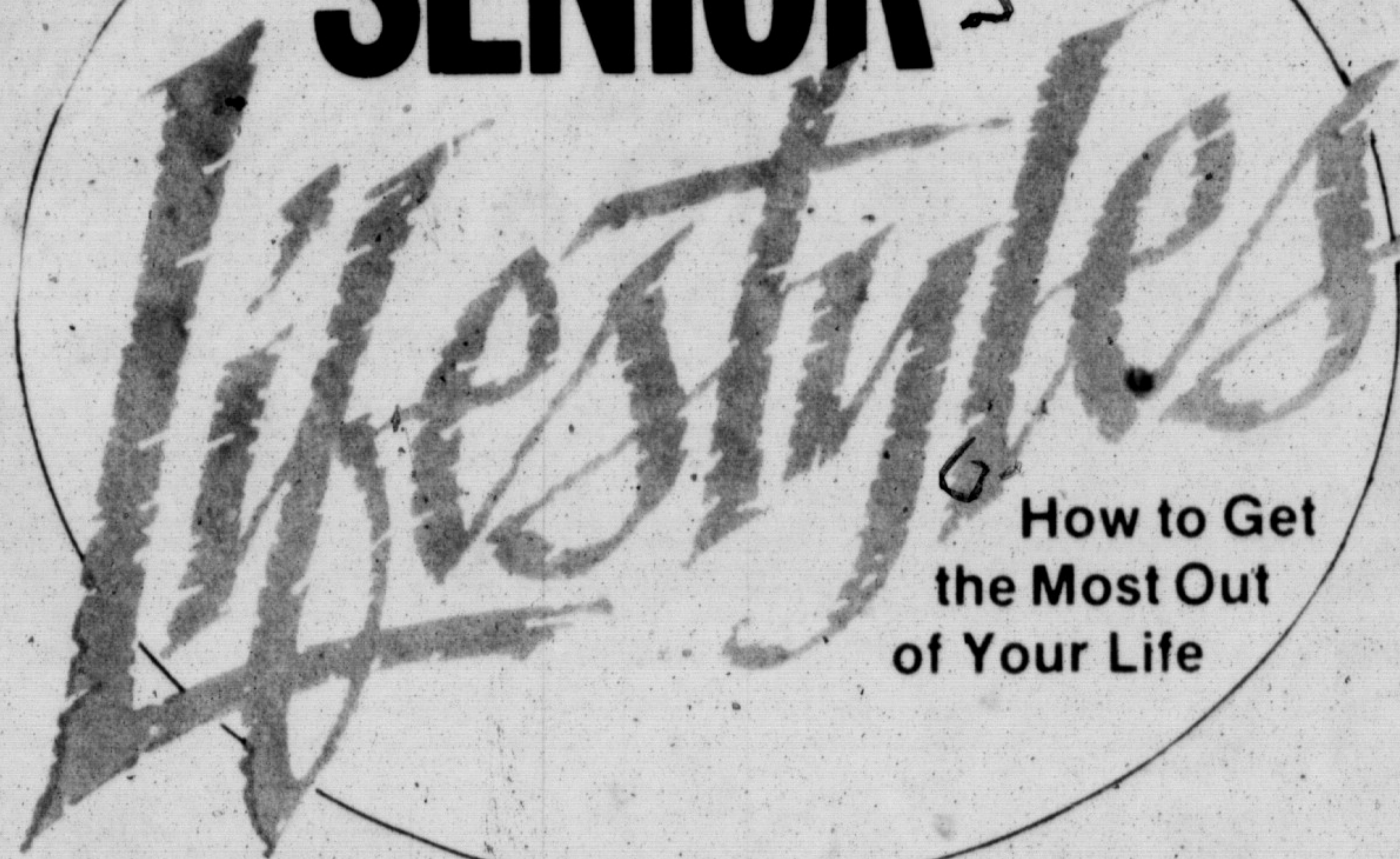


## Spotlight on seniors

with JANE MULLER

# SENIOR



How to Get  
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It will be a more elderly society which enters the 21st Century, that is to say there will be more older people than ever before.

The majority of senior citizens are healthy and active and it isn't until they reach the age of 85 that their health begins to fail. The numbers of these frail elderly will increase by 110 per cent in just 15 years. They are the ones who require the most services.

Gaps in services for seniors are already being noticed and moves are being made to plug them before the flood of users begins. The provincial government has formulated five strategies for coping with this dramatic change in the population. These were contained in a report from Ron Van Horne, minister for senior citizens' affairs, called "A New Agenda".

The central theme of the report reflects the ideas in the quote taken from the United Senior Citizens' brief above. An effort will be made to prevent unnecessary and inappropriate institutionalization, the theme states.

There are plans to make the elderly population more healthy. To that end, geriatric and psychogeriatric specialists must be in good supply. It is obvious the field of geriatrics will be opening some career doors in the near future. Mr. Van Horne's report also recommends more research relating to the aged and aging be done.

He calls for "significant expansion" of community services. This is a necessary step if seniors are to stay in their own homes as long as possible. It is known that those who are able to live outside of institutions enjoy better health. Hospitals must develop specialized outpatient and inpatient services for the elderly and expand rehabilitation and convalescent services, the report states.

Included in the "new agenda" is the provision of high-quality institutional care. Improvements in extended-care programs in nursing homes and a regulating system for the quality of care in rest homes are needed, according to the report.

## Seeking seniors' consensus for future

The experience and knowledge of senior citizens is being tapped in an effort to plan for their future.

About 35 residents of the region over the age of 65, will be offering solutions to problems facing their age group. They will be participating in the first of what are planned to be annual seniors' forums.

"We need to plan as a community. We need to have a voice in the planning process, especially the people who are most affected," said Val O'Hara, co-ordinator of the Elderly Services Advisory Committee.

Three workshops will cover issues identified in a study of seniors' services, which must expand with the growing elderly population. It will stand at 1.4 million in 2001, that is a 55% increase from 1983. The number of people over the age of 75 takes the largest proportionate jump. The provincial Minister for Senior Citizens' Affairs, states that this increase, "is creating a new generation of issues which will have a profound effect upon provincial services."

According to Mrs. O'Hara, people age 85 and older, are most apt to have health problems. She said people who are senior citizens are caring for parents in that age bracket. Relief and support for caregivers is one of the issues the seniors' forum participants will address tomorrow. Halton Centennial Manor provides a limited number of beds for vacation care and some private retirement homes also offer short-term residential care.

"Most families that need relief have a family member needing a lot of care," Mrs. O'Hara explained.

Respite care in the home is an option as are day programs outside the home. Family members of those with Alzheimer's disease could also benefit from expanded programs, says Mrs. O'Hara.

Eight Milton representatives will be among the seniors who will be commenting on the needs of caregivers. Their knowledge and personal experiences are expected to be the basis for ideas which will resolve some identified problems.

The ESAC committee is making plans based on recommendations and "practical ideas" from the

people they affect.

They are going to be asked about "ways to encourage the socialization of isolated elderly," Mrs. O'Hara describes this group as people living in rural areas or those who have no friends and family available; and people in poor health or lacking mobility. Getting these isolated people involved will contribute to improved health and delay a potential need for acute care. A life of isolation, she says, "seems like such a waste."

"The mechanisms should be there, should they want to participate in community life. There should be some sort of vehicle there to help them do it," the ESAC co-ordinator said.

Forum participants are members of the local senior citizens' advisory committee along with town councillor Rose Harrison and Leisure Services program supervisor, Bonnie Ward. Similar committees have been formed throughout the region. The Milton committee will deal with local issues and will act as a sounding board for concerns of older Miltonians. Information will be fed to town council from the committee.

Mrs. O'Hara cited the efforts of a group of senior citizens in Halton Hills who were instrumental in the establishment of a toll free telephone number. When Canada Pension offices at Brampton and Oakville were closed, so were the toll free calls from pensioners with questions about their benefits. A 1-800 line has been applied for as a result of the actions of the residents.

The local committees are expected to act on the concerns of other senior citizens who "will know there is someone to go to locally."

In Milton they'll be going to the committee's citizens at large: Verna Callan, Ethel Riddell, Kay Page, Edith Marr, Enid Mongraw, Jean Hassel-feldt, A. Vardy and Edgar Foster. ESAC member Ann Ptolemy is also on the committee.

The forum they'll attend is part of "an ongoing process" in planning for services and identifying issues, said Mrs. O'Hara.

"We hope to get a consensus on the three topics we discuss. We'll be making recommendations," said committee member Edgar Foster.

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— Psalm 92:13 & 14 With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation. — Psalm 91:16



The Intergenerational Program at Halton Centennial Manor involves children at The Family Place meeting with seniors in the Manor on a regular basis. On Monday, the children visited residents on the second floor of Martin House. Here resident Bob Brush chats with T. J. Patterson, 3 1/2.

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