

Key to stopping AIDS is discouraging gay sex: Scholtens

By NORMAN NELSON
Burlington regional councillor Ralph Scholtens thinks Halton Region's new \$97,000 AIDS awareness campaign is missing the point. He told Monday's health and social services committee meeting that it doesn't address "the largest group of

people who spread and have AIDS — homosexuals." Getting this group to give up the "unnatural act", he said, is the key to fighting the spread of AIDS. Just as people are encouraged to give up smoking because of the high risks of lung cancer, he suggested

that gay people should be encouraged to give up homosexual acts. **Failed to sway**
Mr. Scholtens' strong views on the subject, however, failed to sway other committee members.

"I don't understand gays, but then I don't understand Progressive Conservatives," quipped Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn. He added that governments have no business telling citizens what sexual preference they should adopt. The AIDS prevention program is

aimed at high school students, about 50 per cent of whom are sexually active, according to the Region's medical officer of health, Dr. Graham Pollett. He said the Halton program is unique in that its goal is not just to provide information to those who are sexually active, but also to "support and promote the decision to use sexual abstinence as a method of AIDS prevention."

Safer sex

The latter stance, he conceded, is not well represented. Posters and pamphlets available from the provincial and federal governments emphasize safer sex.

For instance, one poster features a disconsolate young couple with a caption: "I can't believe we both forgot."

The caption on another reads: "Evening wear for lovers that care." Both, of course, are designed to encourage the use of condoms.

In order to address this gap Halton Region, in consultation with the Halton Roman Catholic Separate School Board, is designing its own posters. One example, displayed to committee members, featured a young couple, with the caption: "Saying no is a positive decision."

Burlington councillor Walter Mulkewich said he hoped both messages reach the intended targets.

"We'd like all sides to be heard, but in reality that will not happen," replied Dr. Pollett, referring to the fact that separate schools and many public schools have been reluctant to promote the sometimes blunt safer sex messages for fear that it might encourage increased sexual activity.

"We're trying to get as much information as possible to the public in order for them to make choices for themselves."

Advocating sex

Councillor Scholtens, however, said he doesn't believe 13 and 14 year old students should be making such choices, and doesn't support the posters, which he alleged are "advocating sex and promiscuity. I certainly hope parents will suggest what posters they want."

The program, funded entirely by the province, also includes the distribution of 50,000 condoms, along with information packets, which will be available through the medical community, family planning clinics and social service agencies.

"For those individuals who have made the decision to be sexually active, information and resources will be available to support their safe sex decision," stated Dr. Pollett in his report.

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