



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

AWH is a collaborative of twenty women's groups and social agencies that advocate and amplify the voice of women. The monthly meetings give us an opportunity to hear about the activities and challenges of member organizations. This newsletter is another avenue for readers to learn about AWH member activities during the previous month.



July 2025

Happy Canada Day!

Message from the Chairs

Summer is here. Often a time to rest, reflect, re-energize. As we head off for a bit of a respite we want to highlight some of what was done this year and those who continue to make Halton a better place. At Advancement of Women Halton we recognize the amazing work that happens because we all work together for the common good.

First and foremost, AWH would not exist without the wonderful organizations that make up our general membership. Every day you stand up for those who may require a hand to hold, a shoulder to lean on or resources to help them reach their full potential. You enrich our communities every day.

Thank you to our AWH committees for the debates you had, the research you did, the letters you wrote, the meetings you attended and the events you organised. You are mighty women.

Thank you to those who put themselves out there and ran for elections at any level of government. We appreciate the sacrifices you made and the work you do.

And finally thanks to all of you for signing petitions and pledges we sent out, for making calls to local elected officials on topics we were advocating and for supporting our work. The work continues and we know you will be with us as we forge ahead.

Have a wonderful summer.

In solidarity, Maureen and Teri

On Canada Day, we wanted to share a vision of Canada from [Tommy Douglas](https://youtu.be/vhiKlhTmwDU?si=J1QbR3fzciG_1W6)
https://youtu.be/vhiKlhTmwDU?si=J1QbR3fzciG_1W6

Editor's Note

The final edition for the AWH year is on the hefty side! Best read in instalments...

The Toronto Star asked journalists to pick a story from Canada's past that captures something essential about this country. [Here's what Carol Off had to say.](#)

One early April morning in 1970, a group of women gathered in Vancouver, believing they would soon make history. Their plan was to drive 4,000 plus kilometres to Ottawa, and confront the federal government to demand that abortion become a legal right in Canada.

If you were on the Transcanada that week, it would be hard to miss the Abortion Caravan. Union-activist Cathy Walker barrelled down the highway in her Volkswagen van. Spray-painted on the side in large letters was "Abortion is our Right!" And strapped to the roof was a coffin-like black box, to represent the thousands of Canadian women who died each year from botched abortions.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had declared "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" and Canadian feminists had cheered him on.

But it turned out that Trudeau's Liberals had no qualms about the state being in the nation's wombs.

The women held meetings in community centres and church basements. They staged guerrilla theatre with cans of Lysol, knitting needles and coat hangers, to demonstrate what women used to terminate pregnancies, often destroying their bodies. And they recruited more people for their mission.

By the time the caravan passed through Toronto, hundreds more women had joined. More than 500 angry feminists finally gathered on Parliament Hill. They had hoped to speak with John Turner. He didn't show up; the women learned he was playing tennis. In fact, no one from the Liberal government showed up that day.

On the following Monday, the women, wearing borrowed dresses, stockings, nice shoes and even gloves, managed to get passes to the visitors' gallery of the House of Commons. Their large stylish handbags concealed lengths of chain.

In the gallery, the women padlocked themselves to their seats and began to shout out their message, addressing those who had refused to meet with them over the weekend. Security ran around frantically as MPs yelled back, calling the women whores. The speaker of the house finally did something that had never been done before. He closed down the sitting.

Newspapers reported "Commons Session Aborted by Screaming Women."

But nothing came of it. Canada did not decriminalize abortion until Doctor Henry Morgentaler won his case before the Supreme Court of Canada — 18 years later.



June began with The Throne Speech

Ex-NDP MP Peter Julian, former CPC MP Karen Vecchio and ex-Liberal minister Ya'ara Saks took part in a Pearson Centre webinar digesting the throne speech, two days after King Charles III delivered it from Ottawa. In the speech, the government promised to “protect” these existing programs while touting a recent expansion of the dental care regime, though Julian argued there was a “notable lapse” in referring to pharmacare.

“The operative word was maintaining what exists now, and what exists now is only the first step,” Julian said.

Pearson Centre CEO Pam Damoff, a former Liberal MP who did not seek re-election, moderated the webinar.

She noted the Disabilities portfolio was also dropped from Carney's cabinet, and the throne speech had no mention of helping this cohort, despite persistent concerns that the government's Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) is not enough.

A Vision of Canada *From Council of Canadians*

We do not want a society based on greed, anxiety and scapegoating. The Canada we want is based on inclusion, community and investing in our common good.

We want our government to act firmly to defend Canadian jobs and sovereignty. We need a national strategy to strengthen local industries, build truly affordable housing, sustainable energy systems, and procurement policies adopted at every level of government to support Canadian-made products and services. Made in Canada matters!

Instead of massive subsidies to oil and gas CEO's and their pipelines, we need to build a job-rich transition to a truly sustainable economy. Instead of corporate tax breaks, we need an immediate safety net created for those whose jobs and incomes are affected by Trump's aggression.

Public services and programs, like health care, are vital to our standard of living. A key priority should be ensuring that every Canadian has access to a family doctor or community clinic, while taking measures to stop any privatization of our health care system. Canadians want a society that provides good jobs, respect and a decent quality of life for all.

Nation Building Projects should also reflect Canadian values, including compassion

Andre Picard in Globe and Mail

The Liberal government of Mark Carney has introduced legislation that would fast-track “nation building” projects. The bill, defines a “major project” as one that contributes to national prosperity, strengthens economic resiliency, advances the interests of Indigenous people and meets climate change objectives. If a project meets these criteria, it could benefit from streamlined approval and, presumably, a whack of federal cash. Let’s hope however that this isn’t all about pipelines, power plants and other bricks and mortar infrastructure projects. Because there’s something missing in the selection criteria: Values.

The most impactful nation-building projects are programs that focus on bettering the health of people, both physically and financially.

Like Medicare. The underlying philosophy of Canadian Medicare is that no one should be denied essential care because of an inability to pay.

Reforming Medicare would be profoundly impactful on national scale.

What better nation building projects could there be than programs that are not only uniquely Canadian but distinguish us clearly from Americans?

“If the US no longer wants to lead, Canada will” Mr. Carney said back in April.

There is currently a campaign to end the scourge of HIV/IDS by 2030

Imagine if Canada made this its cause.

HIV/AIDS has infected an estimated 88.4 million people, 39.9 million of whom are still alive. 75% are currently taking antiretroviral drugs that suppress the virus.

If we could get the other 10 million on treatment, further infections would virtually disappear. Imagine a Canada without HIV or AIDS. That could be a bold Canadian goal, one worthy of our ambitions. Soft power suits us better than hard power.

All this may seem fanciful. But our Prime Minister has spoken and written eloquently on the importance of socially motivated investing, on the importance of putting purpose before profit.

In his 2001 book “Value(s): Building a Better World for All” Mr. Carney writes about seven key values that are essential for building a better world: solidarity, fairness, responsibility, resilience, sustainability, dynamism and humility, all laced with compassion.

The way to embrace those values is to invest in programs that make people healthier and more equal, like Medicare and ending AIDS.

Economically, and otherwise, we should take that over a pipeline any day.



Extreme Heat

Our laws, whether they govern housing, schools, workplaces or prisons, haven't kept pace with the climate crisis. And in the absence of adequate policy, communities are left to try to cope alone. Here are some of the groups at risk:

Children in Schools/Child Care Facilities: Overheated [classrooms and child care centres](#) threaten children's physical health and compromise their ability to learn. Many buildings lack ventilation or cooling, revealing gaps in education and public health policy.

Tenants: Renters, especially those in aging apartments, face dangerously high indoor heat. With [no maximum indoor temperature standard](#) in residential housing, many have inefficient cooling, have to pay out of pocket for cooling devices, or worse, go without.

Migrant Agricultural Workers: Often housed in temporary, substandard conditions, [migrant agricultural workers](#) are frequently exposed to extreme heat in their housing and in their work, with little regulatory protection or ability to speak out.

Prisoners: People incarcerated in overcrowded, poorly ventilated facilities are often subjected to extreme indoor heat without relief. This is a matter of basic human rights and health equity.

Indigenous Schools and Communities: Many Indigenous communities face even greater impacts from heat due to being chronically underserved and underfunded for infrastructure and health services.

To meet this challenge, we need bold systemic action. Governments at all levels must modernize laws and regulations to reflect the realities of a warming climate. This includes setting maximum indoor temperatures in housing, schools and workplaces, providing cooling in institutional settings, ensuring heat protection plans for outdoor and precarious workers and investing in retrofits that improve safety without displacing tenants or raising rents.

Burlington MP Karina Gould wrote :

Thank you once again for your trust in me to be your voice in Ottawa. It is an incredible privilege to serve you, for a fourth consecutive term, in the House of Commons. While much is happening on the world stage, we are also focused on bringing real economic benefits to Canadians. The Government has presented legislation to bring in a middle-class tax cut, that if passed, will take effect July 1st. Previous programs such as the Canada Disability Benefit will come into effect that same day. The Canadian Dental Care Benefit is now open to all eligible Canadians.



Oakville MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos wrote

"The Ontario government is investing over \$4.2 million to expand nursing education and is making it easier for U.S. licensed nurses and physicians to work in the province key steps to strengthen the health-care workforce and improve access to care across Ontario. This includes \$2 million to launch an accelerated RN degree program at Conestoga College, St. Lawrence College, Western University, and York University, allowing students to graduate in 3 to 3.5 years. At the same time, Ontario is cutting red tape to fast-track qualified American health professionals into the system. These efforts will help ensure more trained health professionals are available to provide timely, high-quality care for families across the province."

"(It was) Wonderful to join the Third Annual Coptic Egyptian Festival of Burlington this weekend with Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism [@BramptonGraham](#) and my colleague MPP [@NatalieKPierre](#)

Thank you to His Grace Bishop Mina, Father Anthony and the incredible volunteers at Archangel Raphael and Saint Marina for hosting such a joyful celebration of culture, faith, and community. Congratulations on another successful festival!





Parents in Tanzania are taking a stand to protect children against anti-LGBTIQ stigma, discrimination and violence. This Pride Month and year-round, join us in celebrating the power of grassroots movements like the Parents' Acceptance Campaign by Bridge Initiative Organization (BIO), a Stephen Lewis Foundation partner. Seeing the urgency to create safer spaces for LGBTIQ youth, BIO began working with families to help them to understand and respect their children's identities. By building support and acceptance within families and schools, children and youth are less likely to experience mental health issues, abuse and homelessness, and more likely to enjoy better health, well-being and resilience.

With BIO's support, parents are becoming agents of change in their communities and even advocating to local government. They are challenging harmful behaviours, speaking out against harassment and defending their children's rights. Dangerously, international funding cuts, including by the U.S. administration, are threatening the sustainability of community-led responses to HIV and to protect LGBTIQ rights in countries most impacted by the epidemic.





South African and Canadian grandmothers at SLF dlalanathi in May

Grandmothers United in Solidarity visits.

As we sort through photos and videos from the Grandmothers United in Solidarity visits, we're taking time to reflect on the insights our partners shared with us about their programs, the visions they have for their communities and the expertise they have developed along with their programming and reach. Here's a first peek!

In South Africa we met with dlalanathi. This community partner's name means "play with us. " dlalanathi's programs focus on emotional and mental health, using play therapy to build supportive relationships between adults and children in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. During our visit, South African and Canadian grandmothers had a joint session to share their respective parenting journeys, what it's like to be a *gogo*, and what makes them feel proud of their grandchildren.

How these north Halton children captivated the Prime Minister

Adapted from a story by Melanie Hennessey, Oakville News



A grade 4/5 class from Glen Williams Public School had the experience of a lifetime this week, meeting with Prime Minister Mark Carney in Ottawa, joined by local MPs Kristina Tesser Derksen and Adam van Koeverden.

When PM Carney made a campaign stop in Georgetown, Glen Williams teachers Laforge and Jordan made sure the Liberal leader received a scroll that contained their students' written dreams for Canada from an assignment they had completed that day. It didn't mention the school's name - it simply said the thoughts were written by nine and 10-year-olds.

Much to their surprise, Carney went on to use their words and somehow attribute them to the local students in a [Parliament Hill tariff speech](#), putting an unexpected national spotlight on the hamlet. "The school secretary ran in and said, 'The Prime Minister's office is on the phone for you.' Our first question was, 'How did you find us?' We intended to stay anonymous. They said they had a directive from the Prime Minister to find us, and it has been a busy 48 hours."

Carney couldn't resist making one more local stop during his campaign to personally meet the children who inspired him.

And then, "We reached out to the Prime Minister's office and said, 'We think it would be lovely to have children represented when the King comes,'" said Laforge. Carney's team told the teachers they'd be happy to host the class if they came to Ottawa.

The teachers say the children were given VIP treatment everywhere they went, including the House of Commons, the Senate and other areas that aren't normally accessible to the public.

The visit wouldn't have been complete without a personal sit down with the Prime Minister himself, who was ready to answer questions the students prepared on their own.

“He has an ease with children, he has a fun banter. It was the most precious experience,” said Laforge.

Carney’s impact on them will continue. He brought the students a time capsule when he visited the Glen, and Laforge and Jordan will have the kids write a letter to themselves at the age of 18 to include in the memento. “We’re hoping to put a timestamp on the time capsule to open at the first election after the kids turn 18, and then gather and vote together,” said Laforge. “It’s not over yet.”

Grandmothers Voice

Sitting With Elders June 7th

From Ramona Leitato Oakville News

As National Indigenous History Month continues through June, this month has already been a trying time for many Indigenous communities.

With the ongoing wildfires harming Indigenous territories across Canada, and Ontario's Bill 5 becoming a law, Indigenous communities are hurting with some lacking a space to engage and heal with each other.

For those in the Halton Region area, however, one such space already exists: Grandmother's Voice. Founded in Oakville, Grandmother's Voice is a nonprofit organization that aims to reconnect urban Indigenous people with their heritage, build dialogue with each other and heal.

It's also a space for non-Indigenous people to learn about Indigenous history and culture through Elders, which is especially important during times of "chaos," says co-founder Grandmother Renee Thomas-Hill, a Cayuga Nation grandmother and healer.

One of the organization's most recent healing events that took place earlier this month was Sitting With the Elders, which took place at The Meeting House in Oakville.

It was an opportunity to learn from the Elders — like Dennis Windego, Grandmother Renee Thomas-Hill and Grandmother's Voice other co-founder, Gail Whitlow — who shared their wisdom and knowledge on how to heal and take care of the land for the next generations.



Grandmother Renee speaking to the attendees at the Sitting With the Elders event

There was a collective sound healing meditation conducted by Amanda Doxtator from the Turtle Clan of Oneida, and songs sung by Jennifer Luxmore-Begin, a settler-Anishinaabe musician with roots in Mattagami First Nation.

A sacred fire was outside for people to pay their respects to the ancestors, while Indigenous vendors were inside selling items like beaded earrings, medicinal herbs, artwork, books and food.

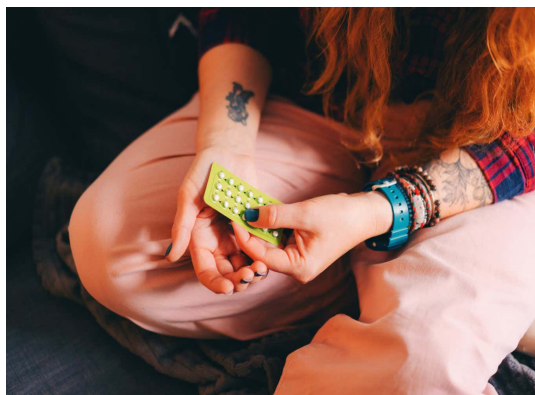
In 2019, Harbour, Whitlow and Thomas-Hill met and discovered that their great grandmothers were sisters. They bonded and later launched Grandmother's Voice. "Our great-grandmothers got us together for a bigger purpose," Thomas-Hill said.

Six years later, Grandmother's Voice has come a long way in being that safe space for urban Indigenous peoples and engaging communities in Halton, Harbour says. One of the biggest challenges, however, is accessing funding.

Grandmother's Voice was created with the Urban Indigenous Action Plan (UIAP) in mind. The UIAP is a policy framework made in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Métis Nation of Ontario, the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Ontario government in 2018, to guide the provincial government in creating policies, supporting programs and practices to respond to the needs of the urban Indigenous communities.

One of the recommendations in the Action Plan includes, "ministries to provide necessary resources, such as dedicated funding, to directly support urban Indigenous organizations and communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs that impact urban Indigenous people."

One of the ways all levels of government can do that is by supporting Grandmother's Voice in building an Indigenous Centre in Halton, that would work as a permanent space for urban Indigenous people to reconnect and learn from the Elders.



How does the pill affect your brain? We're finally getting answers

By [Teal Burrell New Scientist](#)

Oral contraceptives have been effectively preventing pregnancy for more than 65 years, but it has only been in the past 10 that scientists – many of them women – have started to seriously examine what effect they have on the brain.

New research is showing that oral hormonal contraceptives may alter the risk of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, affect the brain's response to stress and change the structure of certain brain regions. Evidence presented at the European Stroke Organisation Conference in May also shows that women on oral contraception face a threefold increased risk of cryptogenic ischemic stroke, when a clot blocks the flow of blood to the brain.

But though research into the effects of hormonal birth control on the brain has picked up steam in the past decade, politics are threatening to bring this to a halt.

In April, the Trump administration dismissed the team responsible for managing the US's national guidance on safe and effective use of contraception, along with employees at the division dedicated to women's health and fertility at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This means the loss of valuable data and guidance on the safety of contraceptives. Women's health researchers at major universities, have seen their federal grants revoked, after the Trump administration forced the termination of grants potentially related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Words triggering immediate scrutiny included "women" and "female". For the foreseeable future, the research programs that will be considered worthy of funding are not likely going to be those that focus on women's health.



On June 7 GASP together with Halton Hills Climate Action, hosted a rally at Dominion Gardens Park Pavilion in Georgetown against Bill 5. Speakers for this event were: Daisy Radigan from GASP, Mike Marcolongo from Environmental Defence, Matthew Tyhurst from Georgetown District High School, Mike Schreiner from the Ontario Green Party and Danny Beaton, from Turtle Clan, Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River.

Bill 5 is a huge omnibus bill that fast tracks development at the expense of Indigenous rights, our democracy and our environment. It repeals the Endangered Species Act, replacing it with a much weaker version, fails to consult with Indigenous communities and creates Special Economic Zones where developers, selected by cabinet as "trusted proponents," are exempted from any provincial or municipal laws or by-laws. There has been a huge outcry from Indigenous communities, environmental groups, Amnesty International, Democracy Watch and individuals all moved to act and speak out. GASPs phoned MPPs, wrote letters, signed petitions, went to Committee meetings and rallied outside Queen's Park.

Bill 5 passed easily on Wed. June 4th supported by the majority Conservative government, but that's not the end of the story. The fight will continue, and Bill 5 will be repealed.





We have been asked, what is the status of Child care spaces in Halton Region? We share with you below an update that is very disappointing. Greater advocacy is underway to address the needs of Halton's families.

Halton Region receives Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (\$10 a day childcare) funding and spaces from the Provincial Government so families can access affordable child care across the region. The number of CWELCC spaces allocated to Halton Region from the Provincial Government remains insufficient to meet growing community needs.

There are 18,096 “\$10 a day” childcare spaces operating in Halton right now. This is well below what is needed. In 2024, the projected 0-12 population was 91,877 and projected to reach 114,922 in 2034.

The Region has repeatedly told the Provincial Government that this is inadequate. It is imperative that Provincial Government funding in Halton keep pace with growth related needs.

Halton Region received 55 applications requesting 5,348 total CWELCC spaces.

Insufficient \$10 a day funding and spaces from the Provincial Government meant only about 20% of applications could be approved.

Next Steps for Halton Region Advocating for Halton Families

Halton Regional Council and staff continue to advocate to the Provincial Government for more CWELCC spaces and funding, so more families have access to affordable child care in Halton.

We are working directly with Members of Provincial Parliament to ensure they are aware of the Region’s needs and can take action on our local issues.

The Regional Chair will be writing to the Minister of Education to request that the Provincial Government reassess the allocation of “\$10 a day” spaces in Halton, and hopefully provide more.

AWH will continue to campaign for progress on funding and spaces.

Women In Black hold Gaza Vigils

On June 6 the Magnificent Michele Landsberg convened this Gaza protest at Yong and Bloor in Toronto.



And on June 13, 19 and 27 Women In Black vigils took place at Oakville Town Hall, organised by Lorraine Green, together with Carole Holmes and AWH's own magnificent Bev LeFrancois.



Many women, young and old (plus a few men) all dressed in black, gathered with signs mourning the violence and starvation and loss of life in Gaza.



From co-chair Rabia Khedr

Our management team and board gathered in Toronto to strategize, strengthen community ties, and celebrate key achievements. Our grassroots reception featured powerful spoken word by Leroy Innis and music by pianist Karim Ashroff, leaving participants inspired and connected.

On June 2, Board Chair Michelle Hewitt and I hosted a national webinar highlighting significant milestones - legislation, regulations, and budget commitments - while emphasizing the ongoing work needed to #BetterTheBenefit.

I also traveled to Ottawa for strategic meetings with Minister Hajdu's Chief of Staff, MPs, Ministers, and Senators, advocating for swift implementation of the technical amendment to exempt the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) from taxation and to ensure a smooth benefit rollout.

Special thanks to Senator Chantal Petitclerc for organizing valuable discussions with Senators Bernadette Clement, Mary Coyle, Marilou McPhedran, Kim Pate, and staff from Senator Andrew Cardozo's office, highlighting the Senate's vital role in refining disability legislation.

Applications for the Canada Disability Benefit officially launched on Friday, June 20.

You can find the full eligibility criteria, application process and contact information for support [here](#).



FAFIA The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action recently released a statement raising serious concerns about the expansion of **Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)**, especially its disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities and women with disabilities.

The message is clear: MAiD policies must be grounded in human rights, with safeguards that address systemic inequities and prevent further harm to those already marginalized.



Newsletter

Bringing Science to Life in the Darakht-e Danesh Classroom

Something extraordinary is unfolding in our virtual classrooms: Grade 10 students are diving into the world of science through hands-on experiments and joyful discovery. With support from *Global Affairs Canada*, the Darakht-e Danesh Classroom is more than an online school. It's a space where Afghan learners — especially girls — reconnect with education, curiosity, and confidence.

Each week, dedicated volunteer tutors like Mitra lead engaging sessions in both Farsi and English, making science accessible and exciting. From fizzing chemical reactions to growing crystals, students are learning to think critically, ask big questions, and see the world through a scientific lens.



Afghan girls visit a Science Museum

June 21st was **National Indigenous Day** and **OFFA** showed two films celebrating indigenous culture and storytelling in a gala performance at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. The films were *40 Acres*, and *Sweet Summer Pow Wow*.



UBI Works

Senator Kim Pate introduced Bill S-206 in the Senate—legislation to create a national framework for a *guaranteed livable basic income*.

You can follow the progress of this bill and read about exactly what it contains in our updated legislation page [here](#).

This bill is largely the same as Senator Pate’s former bill S-233 with a few updates: A clearer call to address the housing crisis, explicitly recognizing housing and food insecurity as reasons for action; More detailed and inclusive consultation requirements, including defined engagement with Indigenous Elders and housing authorities; The removal of explicit provisions for *temporary workers*, *permanent residents*, and *refugee claimants*, which narrows the previously stated scope.

Bills that originate in the Senate cannot propose government taxation or spending, so instead this Bill requires the government to study *the issue* and come up with an implementation plan. If it passes in the Senate, it must then also pass in the House of Commons to become law. This is where C-223 was defeated right before the election.

Every inch of progress has come from people like you showing up, writing letters, and moving the needle.

Change is slow—until it’s not. Let’s be ready when the moment comes.

Celebrating Connection and Team Spirit at HMC

The wonderful HMC Newsletter is now on-line

This month at HMC we came together for a special day filled with energy, connection, and teamwork—and it reminded us just how important it is to support one another. The gathering was a chance for our entire team to connect, build friendships, and strengthen the bonds that make HMC a welcoming and united organization.



On June 28 at Sherwood Forest Park, our community came together for a vibrant celebration of Multiculturalism Day, and what a beautiful day it was! From colourful cultural dances to joyful music, our event was a true reflection of the diversity and unity that make our community so special.

Guests of all ages enjoyed live performances from the elegant movements of Filipino dance, the energetic beats from Nigeria, the graceful Bharatanatyam from India, the mesmerizing styles of the Middle East, to the rhythmic flair of Latin America.



Youth Mental Health



More than 70 youth leaders, advocates, clinicians, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders came together in Toronto for an open exchange on youth mental health, hosted by Brain Canada, with support from RBC.

What if we could spot the early signs of mental health distress before they escalate into a crisis? Across Canada, young people are facing more mental health challenges than ever before – and many aren’t getting the help they need, when they need it. That’s why Brain Canada is proud to fund initiatives that don’t just study youth mental health—they involve youth every step of the way.

Take **The Canadian Youth Mental Health Insight (CYMHI) Platform**: a bold, first-of-its-kind initiative guided by young people themselves. Supported by Brain Canada, RBC Future Launch, and Power Corporation of Canada, CYMHI is using AI, data science, and youth insights to build a smarter, more connected mental health system.

From identifying gaps in services to helping young people navigate care, this platform is transforming how decisions are made with youth, not for them.

In May members of the AWH Democracy Committee wrote to Premier Ford and to Halton MPPs protesting the brutal treatment of prisoners at Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton. They were informed by an MPP's office that since an internal enquiry was under way, MPPs would not meet to discuss the issue.

On June 2 Zee Hamid, Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform and MPP for Milton wrote, "The Maplehurst issue is troubling. We expect our correctional officers to maintain the highest standards. We ordered an investigation and are going through the results of that finding. Our position is that anyone who does not live up to the highest standards will face consequences."

A slow-moving but extensive investigation by Correctional Services Oversight and Investigation was done, showing the Charter rights of prisoners were breached, prison and government rules were broken, and guards and Institutional Crisis Intervention Team (ICIT) members lied or misled the investigators.

Some prisoners subsequently made a deal that they wouldn't use the "voluminous" report to show their Charter rights were violated, in return for getting out of jail with a much-reduced sentence .

It is expected that many others caught up in the incident will seek shorter sentences, stays of charges or financial compensation. At this point, there is no evidence if any of the correctional officers involved have been disciplined . The then-superintendent of the facility, Winston Wong, who was seen in the videos fist-bumping a helmeted guard, no longer works at the jail.

On June 10 AWH learned that Ontario's ombudsman has announced an independent investigation into the incident at Maplehurst. We await the report.



Equity

The **Halton Catholic District School Board** hosted their first ever Elementary Student Equity Symposium with the theme being “*Take Space – Make Space.*”

This event brought together 204 Grade 7 students from across the entire board

This year's theme challenged all students to reflect on two important ideas: to “take space” by confidently owning and expressing the person that they are, as well as to “make space” by creating a room where other people can be seen, heard, and valued.



During this day, students took part in three interactive workshops that featured hands-on activities and thoughtful discussion:

In workshop one, which was *Creative Collaboration*, Matthew Morales, Community Engagement Specialist from the UN Global Compact helped students through a community-centered design process to look for what it means to celebrate diversity and work through challenges together.

Workshop two was *Introduction to Leadership*, led by Rising Stars. Students took part in activities that focused on awareness, empowerment, and leadership skills.

Lastly, *Power of Diversity*, presented by The Ripple Effect Education, gave students the chance to look back on their own personal experiences through storytelling, creative brainstorming, and group activities that endorsed the strength of diverse voices.

With 17 staff volunteers and six student volunteers supporting this cause, the symposium created a supportive environment where every student that participated had the opportunity to learn, connect, and grow.

The event celebrated identity, a call to action, and reminded everyone about the power young people hold to create more inclusive and innovative school communities.

GRAN

Members of Golden Horseshoe GRAN visited the Food For Life Warehouse in Burlington. Across Canada GRAN has been conducting a food security campaign with Small Sips, educational articles and webinars on food security issues around the world. Here in Canada, Food Banks have seen a tripling of demand in the last few years. Food For Life recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and shared news of the organisation with the GRANS in a very informative webinar in May.

On June 16 Halton GRANS visited the Food For Life warehouse and toured the facility. Located in a residential area north of the QEW and West of Guelph line, it is a combination warehouse, distribution centre and food market. Surplus food is received from farms and grocery chains and stored briefly in cold rooms and a giant fridge. Some is made available to “neighbours” who come in once a week to fill bins with items of their choice. The rest is packed up for distribution to 11 or more Food Banks in the Halton region. Paid staff include the trained truck drivers who do the deliveries, and the three administrative staff who build relationships with suppliers, volunteers and “neighbours”. The work is done by energetic and passionate volunteers who come in for a few hours each week to fill and pack the orders for distribution and to set up and supervise the weekly marketplace. The GRANS were amazed to see the variety and quality of fresh food available, even including chocolate mousse and birthday cakes. As GRAN member Irene Turpie commented afterwards, “These people are not “do-gooders” They are doing good!”



Influencers and Conservative Politicians Are Making Misogyny Mainstream



Brianna Wiens, Nick Ruest Shana MacDonald , The Tyee

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more overt forms of gendered hate have jumped from obscure internet forums into the mainstream, shaping culture and policy.

As the United States rolls back reproductive rights and passes anti-LGBTQ+ laws, it is important to understand how digital culture fuels this regression.

While these shifts may seem distant, Canadian politics are not immune. Similar rhetoric has emerged in debates over education, gender identity, health care and so-called “parental rights.”

COVID-19 lockdowns set the stage for a surge in online radicalization. Isolated men and boys increasingly turned to social media for connection.

Before the internet, radicalization usually required personal contact. Now, people **could** self-radicalize online, engaging with algorithm-driven content and communities that reinforce extremist beliefs, often without ever interacting with a recruiter. This shift coincided with a marked rise in reported online hate speech and offline hate crimes.

Meanwhile, the experiences of women during the pandemic involved increased labour at home and in frontline jobs. Public discourse began to increasingly value “tradwife” ideals and homemaking. This ensured traditional gender roles were brought back into the mainstream, not just as personal preferences, but as broader cultural expectations.

Project 2025, the well-known policy platform from U.S. conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation, lays out an agenda to repeal reproductive rights, undermine LGBTQI2S+ protections and expand state control over gender and family life.

When misogyny becomes a political strategy, **it** seeps into everyday vernacular, court rulings and public policy, and it’s global in scope.

These campaigns reflect how misogyny is weaponized to influence elections and how such campaigns can be a threat to national security.

President Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Laura Walton

Last week, I joined First Nations communities in opposition to the passage of Bill 5, legislation the Ford Government is selling as a pathway to jobs, economic security, and prosperity to northern Ontario. Don't be fooled. This Bill isn't about building the north. It is about deregulating it. This piece of legislation allows corporations to operate without environmental or labour laws, and violate First Nations rights, all under the guise of "Special Economic Zones".

The government claims this Bill is necessary to 'cut red tape' in response to US tariffs. Let's be clear, First Nations rights, environmental protections and labour laws are not 'red tape'. This is a power grab to give their insiders and developers access to natural resources in the north without having to manage basic human, environmental, or Indigenous rights, and labour standards.

Let's remember that labour laws protect workers' rights to fair wages, collective bargaining, job security, and safe working conditions. They are not obstacles to economic prosperity but are what *make* strong local communities and economies. The north is an attractive place for investment, with its stable, highly skilled workforce. Undercutting this workforce with Bill 5 creates a pathway for employers to operate without labour laws, promoting a race to the bottom in which worker protections and wages are viewed as barriers. Weak labour standards lead to lower wages, higher injury rates, and increased economic inequality, especially for northern Ontario.

Bill 5 also raises serious issues with respect to Indigenous rights. The legislation fails to guarantee free, prior, and informed consent before designating Special Economic Zones on unceded ancestral lands. This is a violation of Indigenous rights, international law, and a departure from Canada's obligations under the Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

What we oppose, and what labour will never accept, is a government pushing through legislation that overrides what northern workers and Indigenous communities have fought and bled for, silences dissent and excludes the very people it impacts the most. We have stopped governments before, and we will again.

People in northern Ontario deserve an economy built on fairness, inclusion, and accountability. Done right, Bill 5 had an opportunity to include local Indigenous voices and improve working and living conditions for northerners. That's the future northern Ontario workers want and deserve.

Elect Respect

Ramona Leitato

Oakville News

They've been followed, threatened, forced to move homes and told to carry personal alarms. Some were even advised to avoid public meetings altogether for their own safety.

Now, a group of Halton officials is calling for change.

On Wednesday, June 18, elected representatives from across party lines and levels of government formally launched 'Elect Respect', a grassroots campaign to fight back against toxic political culture.

"This is about restoring civility, safety and inclusion in our political discourse and in our decision making" said Burlington Mayor Marianne Meed Ward.

Earlier in the day, Halton Regional Council unanimously endorsed a resolution supporting the initiative and encouraging other municipalities to do likewise.

Elect Respect emerged from conversations among local elected women, part of a network called HER (Halton Elected Representatives). Meed Ward recalled a gathering a few years ago when group members began sharing stories of the abuse and threats they had faced.

"It moved well beyond legitimate debate," she said. "This was about threats to physical violence and worse. So, after some tears, we decided to act."

The original HER pledge was eventually adopted by the Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians.

With electrespect.ca now live, members of the public are invited to sign on.

The campaign calls on everyone — not just elected officials — to commit to respectful engagement, call out abuse and support safe participation in democracy.

"This is an all-hands-on-deck matter," Meed Ward said. "Toxicity in politics not only discourages people from running in the first place or it causes people to leave politics... it's actually very dangerous."



Tech Week

On Midsummers Eve (June 23) I attended “Most Ambitious”, the Town Hall launch of Tech Week in Toronto.



The keynote message from Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow was that Canada has the opportunity and the wherewithal to step up and invest in research and development and innovation, and the ambition to become world leaders in Tech of all kinds.

Four young students from Waterloo had everyone take an oath to promote Canadian innovation and expertise.



It was wonderful to meet Canadian visionaries like Aaron Rodericks, formerly at Twitter and now Head of Trust and Safety for Blue Sky)



and Rahul Goel, founder/driving force behind NordSpace, Canada's fledgeling space program



and to sit next to investment bankers from Deloitte's and RBC, who were looking for the **Next Big Thing**.

But I think my favourite event was the panel discussion between 3 young people intent on saving the planet. They were:



Phil de Luna , who founded Deep Sky for carbon capture. He says the goal of the company is to reverse climate change. With funding from Bill Gates, they do direct air capture and store CO2 in a deep geological site in Alberta.

Diana Virgovicova , who invented a simple method of purifying water using AI and quantum chemistry to identify photocatalysts; molecular compounds that can purify water with sunlight - and she founded Xatoms to do it worldwide.



Stephanie Lipp , who started Mycofutures , a company manufacturing leather alternative purses made from mycelium, the root -like structure of mushrooms.

They were so full of energy and enthusiasm it gave me goosebumps.



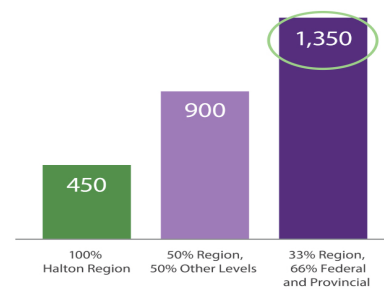
June was PRIDE Month



The colours of the rainbow were all over downtown Toronto on Sunday June 29 as tens of thousands of people marched in the annual Pride Parade. The Toronto Pride Parade, considered the largest in North America, is the culmination of Pride Month festivities. The theme of the 44th edition of the parade is “All In.”

Halton Housing Strategy

Halton Region focusses on assisted, supportive housing in their role as a Service Manager for Housing. Learn how Halton is responding to the housing crisis with data-driven solutions, community partnerships, and a strong focus on supporting vulnerable members of our community. [Comprehensive Housing Strategy 2025-2035](#). The need for this type of housing has grown exponentially and it will take all three levels of government to fill that gap.



With Regional funding we can create **450 new housing opportunities** over the next 10 years.

With Provincial and Federal support, we can **triple that**.



Learn more at halton.ca/housing

Watch our video below to learn more:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOHzGG-Hhjl>

Like a Girl *by Becky Hemsley*

She drives just like a girl you know
And throws just like one too
She fights just like a girl you know
She's just no match for you.

She also runs just like a girl
And that's the way she plays
But when they say, "Just like a girl"
I think they mean to say

Worse,
And somehow less
Somehow slower, somehow weaker.
They think that if she's like a girl
They'll easily defeat her

But girls will go to battle
When they already are bleeding
And girls are great at throwing themselves
Upwards through glass ceilings

Girls are busy navigating progress,
Driving change
And girls are busy winning
Whilst you criticize their game

So, tell her that she's "like a girl"-
She may just prove you right
She may out-play, out-last you
Win the race and win the fight

'Cause she's a driving force
Fighting for her place in this world
And if you try to talk her down
She'll rise up
Like a girl.



