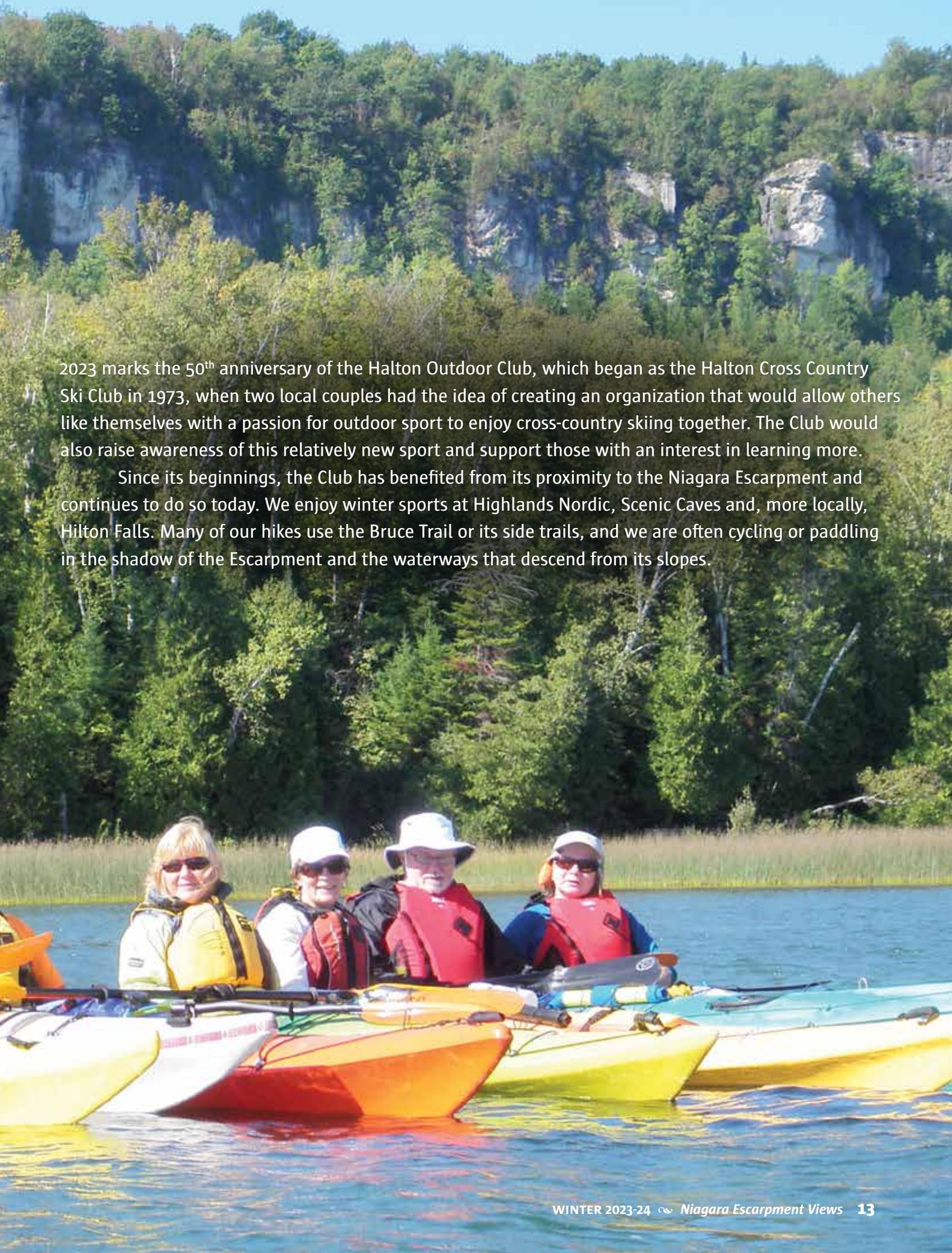


Active and Energized: Halton Outdoor Club at 50

BY LORAIN WALTER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HALTON OUTDOOR CLUB
PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED

Members of Halton Outdoor Club
in Cape Croker Bay on the Bruce
Peninsula, September 2010.

A group of four people are kayaking on a calm body of water. They are wearing life jackets and hats. The kayakers are in colorful kayaks (yellow, orange, and blue). The background features a dense forest of green trees and a rocky escarpment under a clear blue sky.

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the Halton Outdoor Club, which began as the Halton Cross Country Ski Club in 1973, when two local couples had the idea of creating an organization that would allow others like themselves with a passion for outdoor sport to enjoy cross-country skiing together. The Club would also raise awareness of this relatively new sport and support those with an interest in learning more.

Since its beginnings, the Club has benefited from its proximity to the Niagara Escarpment and continues to do so today. We enjoy winter sports at Highlands Nordic, Scenic Caves and, more locally, Hilton Falls. Many of our hikes use the Bruce Trail or its side trails, and we are often cycling or paddling in the shadow of the Escarpment and the waterways that descend from its slopes.

Early Days

It's 1972, and two events fortuitously collide: first, some young couples keep encountering each other while cross-country skiing in local forests and begin talking about skiing together more "officially"; independently, a local newspaper advertises a meeting for people interested in cross-country skiing. And voilà, in 1973 the Halton Cross Country Ski Club is born. To attract members, a "dry-ski school" was held prior to the first ski season. More than 200 people attended, the majority joining the new club.

Initially, members skied locally, with free lessons in Lowville Park. They developed a trail system and shelter at the Hyde Tract, a nearby parcel of Natural Resources land. Over time, bus daytrips were added, heading north to "ski country" on weekend days. Offerings were further expanded to cover entire weekends and longer, including more distant destinations. In the non-ski season, hikes, bicycle tours and the occasional canoe trip were added.

Many early members had young families, and children's ski development programs were offered. The membership grew to a high of 1800.



▲ Celebrating 50 years of club skiing, with Winterlude at Highlands Nordic, 2023.

50 Years Later

In 2023, 50 years after its formation, the Club continues to thrive. Although it has had to evolve with the times, its core values remain the same.

An obvious indication of its evolution is the adoption of a new name to reflect a wider range of outdoor sport activities, becoming the Halton Outdoor Club in 2001. Now, numerous

organized activities are offered across all four seasons: cross-country skiing and snowshoeing; hiking and Nordic walking; recreational and sea kayaking; and cycling.

The demographics of membership have also evolved, from mainly families to adults only. Many of the 600+ current members are older adults, consistent with the trend for healthy active living later in

life. Members come largely from the Golden Horseshoe area between Mississauga and Niagara, but some, attracted by the Club's values and offerings, live farther afield – in Orangeville, London, Guelph, Toronto for example.

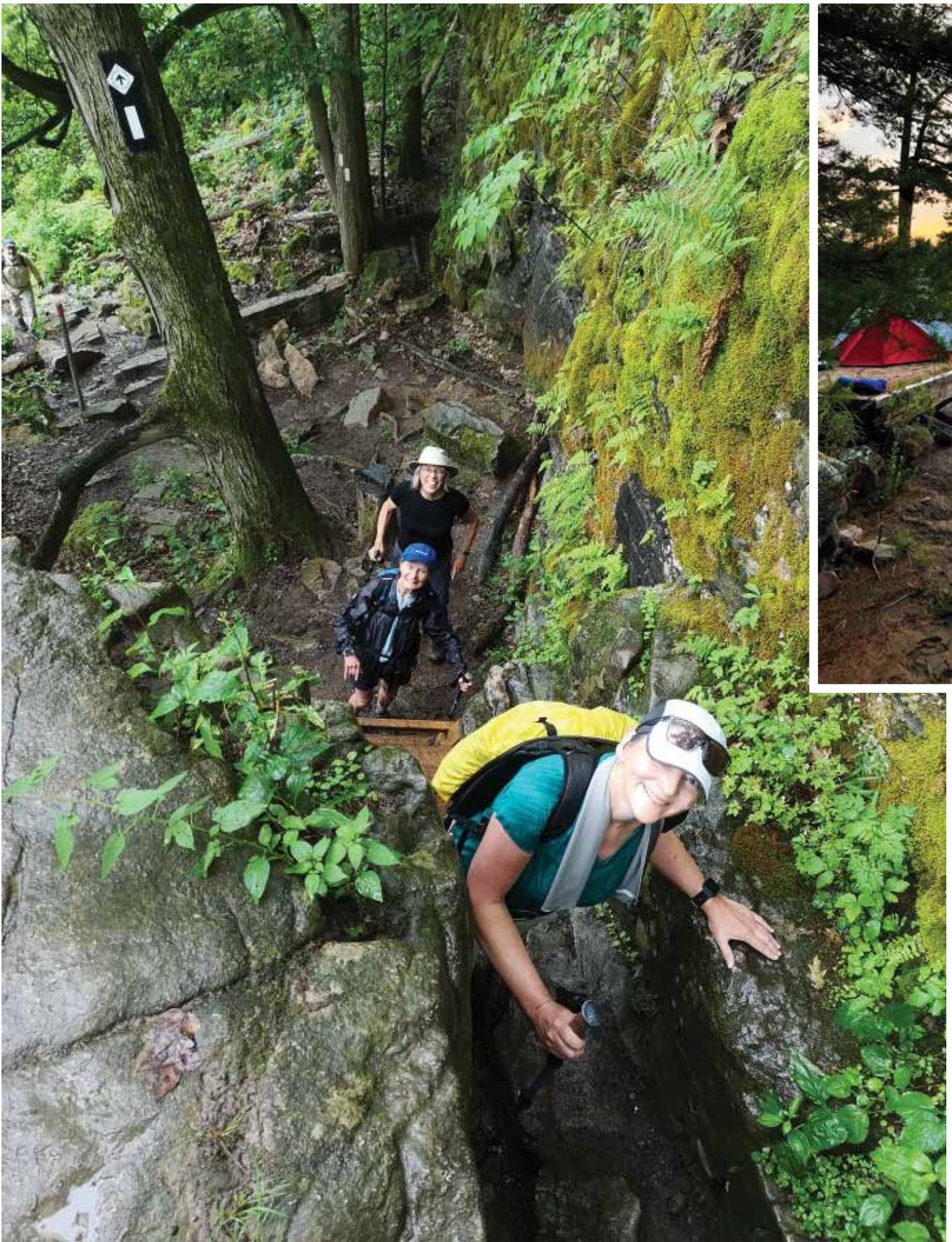
From the start, the Club has been providing opportunities to learn new sport-related skills, to acquire leadership and



▲ Hikers resting during a hike in Beaver Valley, 1983.



▲ Tuesday morning hikes on the Niagara section of the Bruce Trail.



▲ Climbing up the side of Mount Nemo, the first of two 25-km hikes celebrating the 50th anniversary.



▲ End of day paddling in Massasauga Provincial Park, Georgian Bay.

mentoring experience, and to enjoy day and extended outdoor sport trips within Ontario, across Canada and overseas in a healthy, inclusive and safe social environment. This is captured by our tagline “Active and energized together outdoors”. Outdoor activities are offered at a variety of levels to accommodate a broad range of abilities and fitness.

For many, the social value of the Club is huge. In a recent survey, 77 per cent of members indicated that the things they liked best about the Club were “socializing with active individuals.” They also enjoyed “the opportunity to meet new people”. Other common responses were “variety of activities”; “year-round activities”; “great trips”; and “value for money”. Firm friendships and supportive networks are formed, and informal learning experiences are the norm.

Volunteers founded the Club and have run it for five decades. They serve on the Board; plan and implement sport



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▲ Cycling Amherst Island on the Kingston Multisport Trip, 2023.

► 50th anniversary.



programs; plan and lead specific trips, both at home and further afield; and help with everything from planning social events or providing refreshment; to being bus captains on coach trips; creating and leading development activities, such as “Winter Fit,” which is training to prepare for winter sports; and kayak safety training.

From Members

“The Halton Outdoor Club runs well because of an active membership and willing leaders. I have never seen a club where the participants are always so happy.” **Mollie Holloway, Grimsby**

“The great thing about the Halton Outdoor Club is that members welcome you at

whatever skill level you have. They knew we were beginner kayakers and new members. They gave us suggestions if we wanted and we always felt like they had our backs.” **Suzan Butyn, Hillsburgh**

“I love that HOC offers so many event options, that everything is super well-organized and that there are so many interesting people who are enthusiastic to be outside and to share their talents. Love it!” **Jane Walker, Hamilton**

“It didn’t matter that I didn’t know many people on this trip as I met friendly people every time I sat down next to a group that I didn’t know. I was always welcomed and quickly included.” **Ru Wang, Oakville**

From Founding Members

“I am pleased to hear that the club continues to thrive and has been able to find a new appropriate identity. Congratulations to the present and past strong leaders and the many dedicated members for keeping the club alive for so many years and providing this outstanding service to the community.”

Harry Godau, Burlington

“It has been most gratifying to see the large number of outings being offered and supported by the membership in so many sports. The travel offerings with reasonable fees and itineraries are hard to beat...So many friendships have developed within the Club, and there have been several marriages – just to keep things interesting!

Congratulations on doing such a wonderful job from the small beginnings 50 years ago.” **Lyn and Doug Scott, Burlington**

50th Anniversary Celebrations

The 50th anniversary has been celebrated throughout 2023 with a range of sport and social activities, culminating in a gala dinner event held in Burlington in mid-November. Like everything else in the Club, the planning of these was done by enthusiastic, committed and creative volunteers.

For more information and to join Halton Outdoor Club, see haltonoutdoorclub.ca, or email info@outdoorclub.ca or call 905.634.2012. The fee is \$75 a year. **NEW**



▲ Club members prepare for the winter sport season with “Winterfit” classes, La Salle Park, Burlington, 2022.



▲ Skiers on a bus trip in 1996.



▲ Snowshoe hikers at Mountain View Cabin, Silver Star, B.C.



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