

Bad optics

Pan-Am Games Chief Executive Officer Ian Troop found out the hard way this week the definition of 'bad optics'.

The Georgetown resident, who is heading up the Toronto/Ontario Pan Am Games, came under fire when it was revealed high-paid Games executives were charging the public for dubious claims.

Troop, who made \$477,000 last year, and other high-paid executives, were claiming expenses such as \$1.89 for a Starbucks tea and 91 cents for parking.

The expenses in question may well have been within Pan Am policy, which states employees will be reimbursed for any "reasonable" business expenses, but clearly the optics aren't good when people making mega-salaries are billing Joe Taxpayer for tea, fancy dinners and laundry service.

Troop admitted that the policy could use a rethinking.

"You follow your policy, but sometimes you don't realize that common sense sometimes has to intrude."

He said the policy could be "evolved in some areas to make it more appropriate."

After raising the ire of Premier Kathleen Wynne and Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, you can bet the policy will "evolve" as Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister Michael Chan has already ordered the board to "tighten the rules."

Politicians never like it if it looks like someone under their watch is abusing the taxpayer (a cynic might say that's the politicians' job).

The Pan Am Games have an overall budget of \$1.44 billion, funded mostly by all three levels of government (i.e. the taxpayers).

Troop and his group would have been wise to have kept that first and foremost in their thoughts.

WEB POLL RESULTS (Go to www.theifp.ca)

In a deathbed plea, Dr. Donald Low called on Canada to make dying with dignity legal. Would you support physician-assisted suicide?

- Yes (87%)
- No (13%)

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Letters to the editor

Farmers do care about wildlife

Dear editor,

The Independent & Free Press recently printed a story and letter which unfairly paints modern farm practices as irresponsible and uncaring.

John Shadbolt's Sept. 12 letter calls this "killing of the planet". Having farmed and studied agriculture for over half a century I must respond to such irresponsible sensationalism.

The Sept. 5 article, *Bee decline a cause for concern*, also blames the decline in wildlife habitat on farmers who have enlarged their fields. I question what impact the loss of tens of thousands of acres of farmland to the growth of urban areas like Brampton, Georgetown and Milton have had on wildlife habitat? Asphalt does not make good nesting sites either.

In our area of Erin Township many former farms have been subdivided and are now hobby farms and estate lots. We have many wonderful neighbours who have reforested their land or simply let it revert to its natural state. There is probably more habitat

for wildlife in our area now than 50 years ago.

Mr. Shadbolt stated that, "It is well known that wildlife do not like eating GM crops." I have never read a single research paper which makes this incredible conclusion. We have grown both conventional and genetically modified crops for the last 20 years. I can assure your readers that our deer, raccoons, skunks and porcupines enjoy pillaging both conventional and roundup-ready GM crops equally.

Modern farm practices include protecting our environment. Your own paper (Sept. 5) has an ad promoting 'Landowner Workshops for Environmental Planning'. Many farms have planted windbreaks, fenced off waterways, reforested fragile acres, and provided buffer strips to encourage wildlife habitat. We farmers do care about the well-being of the land and its animal life entrusted to our care.

Keith Aitken, Acton

Step up; be competitive

Dear editor,

As a small business owner, I know how challenging it is to own your own business and survive in these tough

economic times.

Moving to Georgetown three years ago, I was impressed by the Shop Local campaign. We have embraced it and supported it whenever possible.

However, an incident, which occurred with a local business and my purchase of an item there, will force me to shop around before purchasing a big ticket item in the future. Local merchants cannot charge thousands of dollars more when consumers can drive to Mississauga and get a more competitive price.

If local businesses want us to shop at their establishments they need to "step up to the plate" and make sure they are competitive, because I can tell you firsthand, based on this experience, they were not.

Tony Cerminara, Georgetown

Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.

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