

Axe taxes on hotel packages, MPP Arnott urges

Ontario should remove hotel and restaurant meal taxes on hotel packages involving extended stays of two or more nights. So said Wellington MPP Ted Arnott to the Provincial Minister of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, during Question Period on March 31.

Mr. Arnott met recently with members of the Elora Chamber of Commerce as part of the Provincial P.C. party's ongoing small business task force consultations.

During that meeting, members of the Elora Chamber of Commerce told Mr. Arnott that Ontario tourism may suffer, because the Quebec government has eliminated its provincial sales tax on meals (including beverages with the meal) and rooms included in hotel packages of two nights or more.

"With the low Canadian dollar, now more than ever is the time to market Ontario to Americans as

an attractive travel destination," Mr. Arnott told the Minister. "One way of doing this is to ensure a level playing field with our province's neighbours."

"Will you commit to removing the room and restaurant meal sales tax as Quebec has done on hotel packages involving extended stays of two nights or more?" Mr. Arnott asked the Minister.

In a letter to the Minister, Tim Taylor, owner of the Elora Mill

Inn, stated: "It would make an incredible difference to Ontario's hospitality industry, both absolutely and competitively, if Ontario did the same (as Quebec in the removal of room and restaurant meal taxes). Please try."

The Minister indicated that she was not considering removing these taxes, citing a report by tourism industry representatives which was presented to her in February.

"That was not one of the key

items that was raised by them," she stated in response to Mr. Arnott's question.

"Tim Taylor was part of the consultation process which led to this report," Mr. Arnott charged.

"This is a suggestion that he's put to us and I'm putting to you and it has been two months since this report was presented to you and you've indicated, really, that nothing's been done since that time."

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PUZZLE PROWESS!

Amanda Turner, 2½, kept busy at Eramosa Community Library's Tot Time on Thursday by putting pieces in Amanda's Closet Puzzle. Mom Karen looks on. (Doug Harrison photo)

Fire safety program a success

BY DOUG HARRISON

The Rockwood Miller

With a waiting list that remains at 60, the Township of Eramosa Fire Department recently graduated 32 children from its pilot Junior Fire Safety program.

Throughout the 10-week program the enrolled students, ranging in ages from 8 to 13, were taught how to crawl through smoke, how to escape from a room or hallway during a fire and what to do when a kitchen fire occurs.

To graduate from the program, children had to pass the necessary examination on Learn not to Burn, First-Aid, CPR, babysitting, fire safety and police safety-related subjects.

"We want to teach today's kids to be better prepared and provide them with more information," says Township of Eramosa Fire Chief Dave Sherrat, who ran the program with firefighters Norm Armstrong and Mike McAlpine and captain Dan Hitchcock.

"We've had instances where kids are at home, a parent is having a heart attack and the kids don't know what to do.

"With the current state of the economy there are more dual-income families and there's a gap after school where the older kids are left alone to look after the younger ones."

Learn not to Burn involves the stop, drop and roll method, along with discussions about chemistry of fire, home fire safety inspections, smoke alarms and an evacuation plan.

In the First-Aid area, the students learned how to do compressions and resuscitation.

Also, during the two police safety sessions, there was street-proofing instruction by OPP community police officer Martin Murray and officer Rick Cadila.

And the babysitter component taught the kids to be aware of: the home address and phone numbers, emergency numbers, where the

parents have gone, escape plans, where medicine is kept and where flashlights are located.

"It gets our children knowing what fire service is all about," states Sherrat, who adds the children were given a tour of the fire trucks, were shown the station's equipment and were told how calls are received at dispatch.

Sherrat says there are plans for another Junior program around May. He adds interested children will be streamlined in either the program for 8 to 13-year-olds or a more detailed program for 13 to 17-year-olds.

"I was impressed with the calibre of questions from the students. The elements today are getting worse — there are a lots of weird people out there and we're trying to alleviate the stress of children at a younger age."

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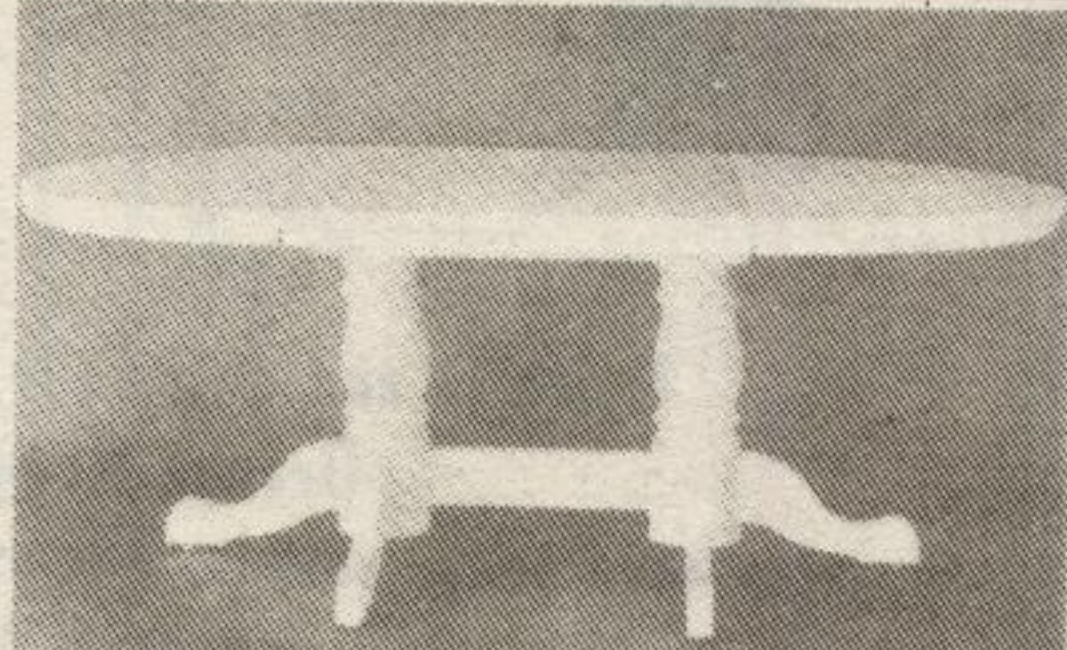
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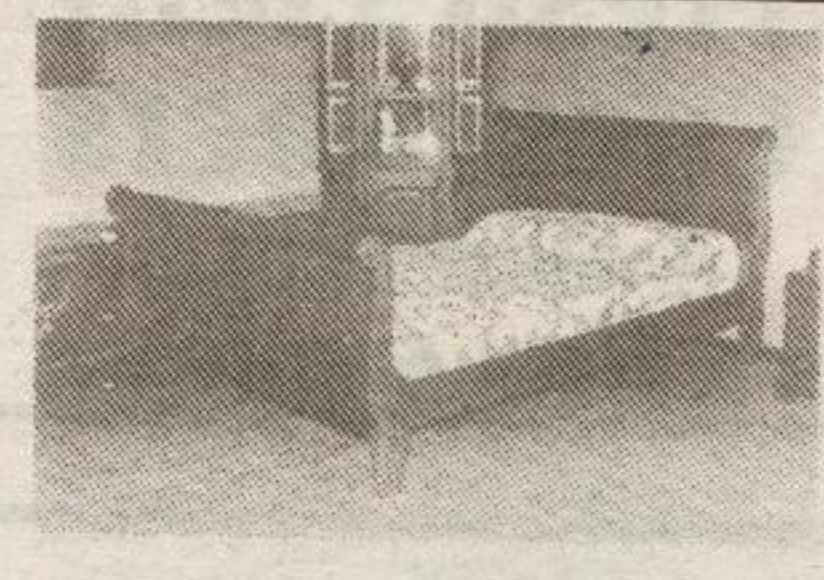
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