

LOOMING ECONOMIC STORM THREATENS VULNERABLE CITIZENS

Storm clouds are threatening economic growth in Ontario and Canada. Last week, the central bank held interest rates amid slowing growth and fears of a major slowdown as early as 2020. The oil price crisis is hurting more than just Alberta's economy. Ontario's manufacturing sector has suffered a setback with news of GM's Oshawa pullout. Other automakers are similarly pinched and more job losses are widely expected. Growth forecasts for 2019 have already been reduced.

Against this worrisome backdrop, consider these recent reports.

The number of Ontario seniors needing to use food banks jumped an alarming 10 per cent last year. And that's not just because more people have achieved senior citizen status. That's a growth rate three times faster than the growth of the province's senior population, according to the authors of the report, the Ontario Association of Food Banks. A half-million Ontarians rely on food banks. The growth trend is expected to continue.

There are a host of "why's." Let's look at a few. The changing workforce in Ontario features a rise in part-time jobs, contract work and precarious employment. More and more people are having trouble and living below the poverty line.

But according to the report, housing costs are the single biggest driver of the crisis. It states that nearly 90 per cent of food bank users are rental or social housing tenants, and they spend the majority of their inadequate monthly income on housing. OAFB chair Michael Maidment says: "If rent consumes as much as 70 per cent of your income, there's little left over for anything else, like transit or food or even things like raising kids ..."

Adding to this, the provincial government has removed rent controls on some kinds of rental units, meaning prices will continue to rise.

If all this isn't worrisome enough, consider food prices. Canada's Food Price Report 2019 predicts an increase overall of about 3.5 per cent. Bakery, dairy, fruit and vegetables are forecast to get between three and six per cent more expensive. The average family grocery bill will grow by \$400 next year.

For many of us, that's an inconvenience. For low income citizens, it's much more. Consider the single social assistance recipient, receiving a little above \$700 monthly, probably paying more than 70 per cent of that on housing. Or the single senior receiving the Old Age Security of \$586 monthly. Or the CPP recipient getting the average of about \$630, which when combined with OAS offers up about \$1,200.

For these folks, an extra \$400 for food is not a minor glitch. It's a potential disaster.

Governments can do something to mitigate these combined threats. They can expedite funding and policy around affordable housing. They can finally implement evidence-based rates for social assistance so they reflect the real cost of living. A national pharmacare program could make a huge difference. The federal government could pick up the Basic Income Pilot project killed by Ontario.

The point is, there are opportunities to prepare for the storm pretty much everyone agrees is coming. Will we seize them, or sit back and wait?

SNAPSHOT



Hundreds of Canada geese congregate along James Snow Parkway. Got a great local photo you'd like to share? Send it to Steve LeBlanc at sleblanc@metroland.com.

David Nevin photo

CEDAR VALE PURCHASED FOR FARMING TRAINING

FIRST 50 BOYS TO ARRIVE IN MAY, WRITES DILLS



JIM DILLS
Column

Time Capsules are gems of information extracted from past issues of the Champion and other publications in order to provide a window into Milton's past.

March 1923

The Armenian Relief Association of Canada has purchased Cedar Vale Farm, at Georgetown, for the training of Armenian boys in all branches of farming. Fifty boys will arrive in May and another 50 later. A clearing auction sale will be held at the farm on Saturday.

• The Women's Institute of Hornby, having under-

taken to improve the condition of Bloomfield Cemetery, on the 6th line, Trafalgar, desire that any person wishing to contribute contact Mrs. W.J. Chisholm, Hornby, Secretary of the Cemetery Committee.

• Last Saturday the freehold voters of the south end of Trafalgar carried, by a vote of 67 to 1, the bylaw authorizing the Utility Commission to buy electric power direct from the Cataract Power Company. Heretofore the power has been procured through the medium of the town of Oakville.

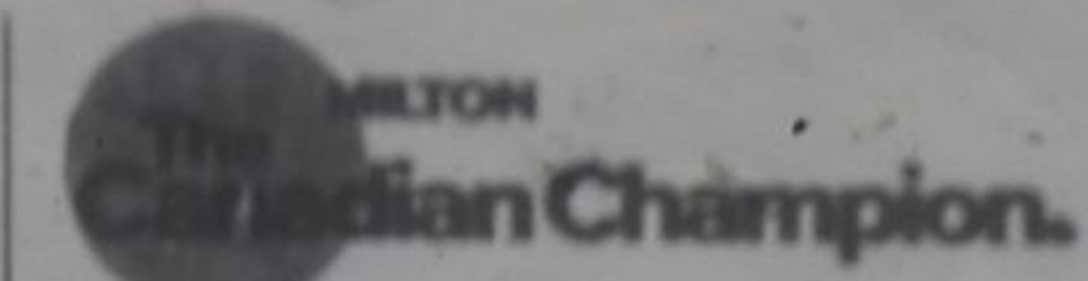
• This musical farce, All Aboard, produced under the auspices of the band at the Princess Theatre, drew a big house on Tuesday evening and another yesterday evening. The fifty young people who took part had rehearsed nightly for two weeks under the highly capable coaching of Mr. Belshaw, of the John

Rogers Producing Co., of Fostoria, Ohio, who got splendid results. The acting and singing were good, the dancing graceful and the costumes appropriate.

• Georgetown and Milton High School girls played a hard-fought game at the arena here last Thursday evening, to twenty minutes overtime, without a score for either side. Milton: Goal Helen Mills, defence Isobel Anderson and Gladys Martin; centre Ruby Wales; wings Loretta Brush and Frances Clements; subs, Mary Stewart, Irene Graham and Ruby Wilson. Referee W. Stewart, Milton.

• V. Chisholm addressed the county council. He asked for a typewriter for the Registry Office.

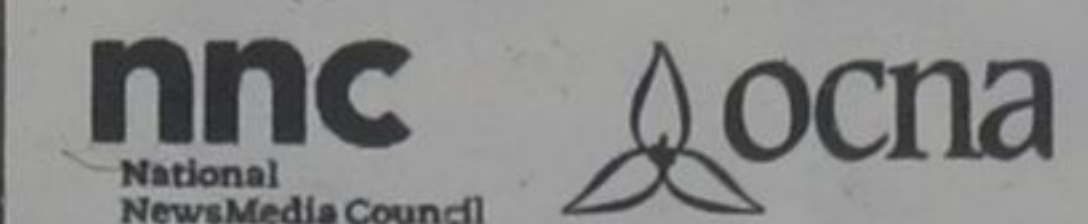
This material is assembled on behalf of the Milton Historical Society by Jim Dills, who can be reached through the society at 905-875-4156.



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