



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Fax: 878-4943

Classified: 875-3300

Ian Oliver *Publisher*

Neil Oliver *Associate Publisher*

David Bos *General Manager*

Rob Kelly *Editor*

Karen Huisman *Circulation Manager*

Teri Casas *Office Manager*

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Explore some options

Halton Regional Police Chief Peter Campbell faces the same dilemma that has confronted managers in both the public and private sectors for the better part of a decade now. It is how to keep costs under control when they are mostly reflected in personnel.

There is no easy answer to the question, but some innovations need to be explored. At present, the Halton force, like many others, has fully trained and compensated officers performing all sorts of tasks — some of which could perhaps be done by other people, or even machines.

Giving out speeding tickets comes to mind, as well as issuing infraction notices for other sorts of minor offences, or even investigating property crimes well after the fact — when there is clearly little chance of apprehending a perpetrator and the investigating officer is by and large cataloguing the stolen goods. These are mostly clerical jobs.

Granted, there is a strong organized labour presence in the police force that would argue against any such moves. Still, there should be equal pressure to explore options in depth from the people who must answer to taxpayers — Halton regional politicians.

Chief Campbell wants 9.3 per cent more money for his department this year than last -- \$43.9 million in total.

This comes in a generally stable community that enjoys one of the lowest crime rates in Canada.

It is true that Halton is a rapidly growing area -- hence a need for more officers. It is also true that investigating serious criminals and crime is a time-consuming business in which results are often hard to measure.

As well, genuine appreciation for the work officers do is not expressed often enough. Many is the time an experienced officer has lamented the fatigue associated with performing his or her work, and predictably expressed a desire to leave a given force at the earliest possible retirement date.

These people, when they are being candid, will often confess that they feel they have had little effect in terms of public safety over the course of their careers. They only see things getting worse.

One must feel for veteran officers in this position. They should know that had it not been for them, things would have likely been worse. They did make a genuine, significant difference by keeping the lid on crime, by holding the thin blue line.

That said, however, politicians in Halton face the same old touchy task of dealing with a prickly financial situation when it comes to the police.

In any other area of public service today, their budget proposal would be immediately dismissed, since it is far outside regional expenditure guidelines.

It gives rise among other civil service departments, and even among taxpayers to the perception that one spending limit exists for everyone else and a more generous benchmark prevails for the police.

Hopefully Chief Campbell's budget is but an opening gambit, to be rolled back by determined regional politicians once it is scrutinized and fully evaluated.

This amounts to putting a good deal of faith in regional politicians, and attributing a certain degree of flexibility to Chief Campbell.

Yet officers of the law are not generally known for their flexibility, nor gamesmanship in budget negotiations.

And, unfortunately, regional politicians are not known for their consistent success in backing off the Halton Regional Police budget demands. So we will see, on the debating floor, and in our tax bills, how things stand.

Rob Kelly



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Letter writer has to be kidding

Dear Editor:

I say you must be kidding in response to E. Kiddle's letter 'Wrestling photos too violent' in the January 13 edition of The Champion.

I truly must ask where the nerve was found to write, let alone print, this article.

For those of you that did not read the letter, in it E. Kiddle bluntly states that he/she found action photos of high school wrestlers printed in The Champion "distasteful" and continues on to promote a 64-day campaign of non-violence, which respectfully commemorates the careers of Martin Luther King and Ghandi.

There is no doubt in my mind or surely anyone's that what Martin Luther King and Ghandi did for the world was prominent.

However, I also know that on August 28, 1963 when King read his Nobel Peace prize winning speech 'I have a dream', prohibiting high school wrestling photo's from municipal papers was not part of his plan. Or that Ghandi, in his rigorous attempts to promote peace among Hindus and Muslims, never believed sport to be an instigator of violence.

How could a highly competitive sport as old as time itself ever promote violence? How could a sport that begins and ends with a handshake between opponents, is notable for its comradery between teams and is based on the principle of hard work, dedication and respect, ever contradict what great men like Ghandi and King ever worked toward?

The local wrestling team and its members are noted around the community for their charitable involvement,

good behaviour and success.

As a graduate of a local high school and its wrestling team, I can only hope that photos and documentation of the teams success will continue to be printed in The Champion, as I look forward to seeing how hard work and dedication can pay off.

I'm sure the late Martin Luther King did too.

Scott McLaughlin
Milton

Please don't charge the Red Cross for space, begs reader

Dear Editor:

This letter is regarding the recent story 'Town considers charging Red Cross for clinic space'.

I have been a blood donor since the mid-50s. Myself and hundreds of thousands of others have never received a nickel for this.

The volunteers who man the stations taking names, making records and phoning committees also received the same amount.

The only payment is the good feeling and the peace of mind in knowing that blood will be ready and waiting if myself, family or friends or anyone else needs it.

Presently blood is available for no charge. Who knows how long this service will be free.

Charging for the little bit of space required for a donor clinic once a month might just be enough to change the way we have free service available now.

Please don't rock the boat.

Norm Coulter
Milton

Pud

by Steve Nease

