

Government not in business of saving teams, says Reed

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Shelling out for big buck athletes, especially in American funds, is what likely led to the NHL's financial woes in the first place, he said.

And the government isn't in the business of rescuing sports teams.

"Professional sport, as exciting as it is, is a business. They're corporations," he said. "If they're having troubles making money because of bad decisions, they should look inside themselves."

Before the reversal, the government had been eyeing public cash to shore up no more than 25 per cent of hockey costs.

The balance would have been made up by provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders.

But that would have meant giving special treatment to the NHL, protested Mr. Reed.

"We have mechanisms for supporting corporations in this country, which we use all the time and it's a heck of a good system, but it's repayable loans," he said. "To me, that makes good sense. Government should support industry and business but it should be through the repayable loan route."

And tightening up federal purse strings won't stick a dagger in the heart of what is usually considered Canada's national sport, he said.

Not even if the top professional teams pack up and head south.

"Hockey roots are not going to be threatened," said Mr. Reed.

Number of politicians debated

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issues can sometimes be bogged down in seemingly endless debate.

"If everyone talks for 10 minutes, that's 200 minutes," he said.

"If one person speaks, everyone has to speak. (At the last meeting) we talked for two hours and then voted unanimously."

How democracy will fare in the latest series of shuffling could hinge on how many politicians are axed, said Mr. Krantz.

"It's a very fragile thing," he said. "If it takes one or two extra politicians to do it, so be it."

But politicians aren't a heavy burden on the municipal system, said Councillor John Challinor.

"It's not about politicians, it's about affordable services," he said. "If you add up the salaries around the (town council) table, it's less than \$150,000."

And Milton issues demand a variety of councillors to best serve the interests of constituents, said Mr. Challinor.

"You need this kind of representation. We have different issues than truly large, urban councillors have," he said. "We operate on a different scale."

Instead of slashing councillor seats, redesigning transit and fire services to fall under a regional umbrella could be a better option, he added.

But the City of Burlington has proved that fewer politicians can work effectively, said Mr. Malboeuf.

That council membership was recently whittled down from 12 to seven.

"I don't judge democracy on the quantity of councillors, but on the quality," he said. "We do have too many politicians and the Province sees that."

But it's too soon to know if super-sizing regions will happen before the November municipal elections.

And if it doesn't, residents could be in for a long three years, warned Mr. Malboeuf.

Case put over a month

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Ms King's lawyer said the single mother of two young children wrote the cheque with hopes that her welfare cheque would come in.

She doesn't receive support from the father.

With the guilty plea, Ms King must

pay back the money and was placed on probation for a year.

She will appear in Oakville court February 29.

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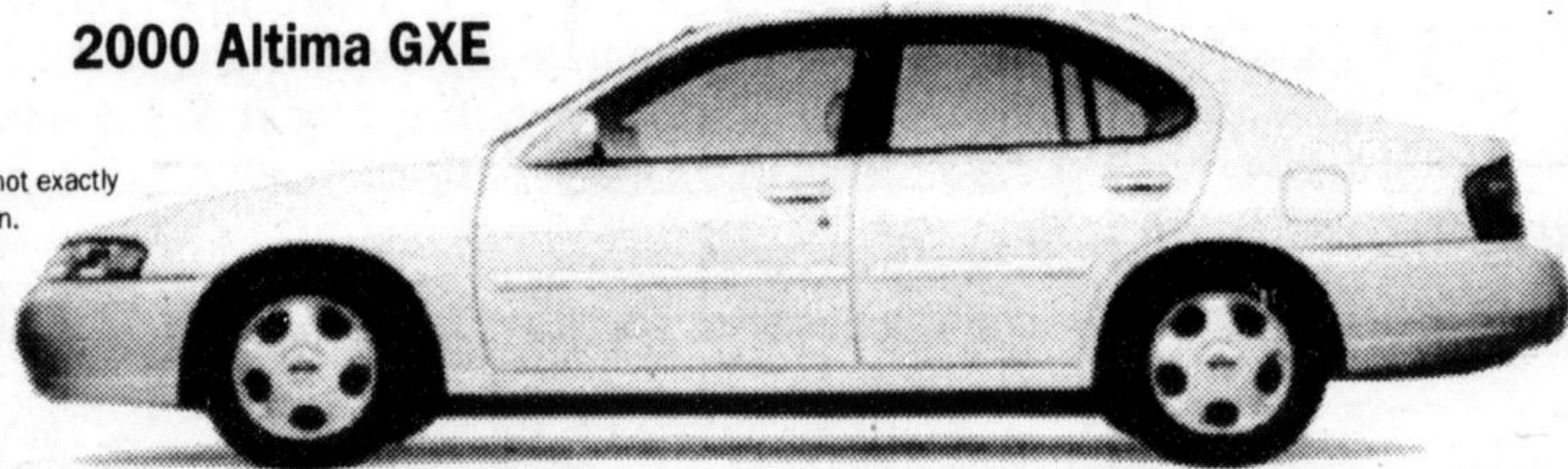
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