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Chicken farmer hit with \$53,500 development fee

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

When fire ravaged Cornelis and John Opsteen's chicken barn, the pair didn't realize they were about to be burned twice.

But when the father-son team opted to expand their operation following the blaze, they were hit with a \$53,500 development charge (DC) from the Town.

The big bill is a result of a new DC bylaw that provides no exemptions for agricultural endeavours, council heard in late March.

"Development charges did apply for the doubly-expanded chicken farm," said the Town's director of corporate services Jim McQueen.

But a DC deferral agreement, which would effectively cut the owed portion in half by exempting charges on the size of the destroyed barn, was extended.

"Mr. Opsteen declined the offer but did ask to appear before council," said Mr. McQueen. "The applicant paid the appropriate development charges but with reservations." Mr. McQueen offered to review the agricultural component of the DC bylaw if directed by council, but noted the Opsteen family's charges were appropriate under the current rules.

"In 1999 we took it to heart that council didn't want development to impact current residents," said Mr. McQueen. "We were really concentrating on the fact council didn't want to see an impact on the taxpayer."

The younger Mr. Opsteen presented his case before council in hopes of dumping the DC fee altogether.

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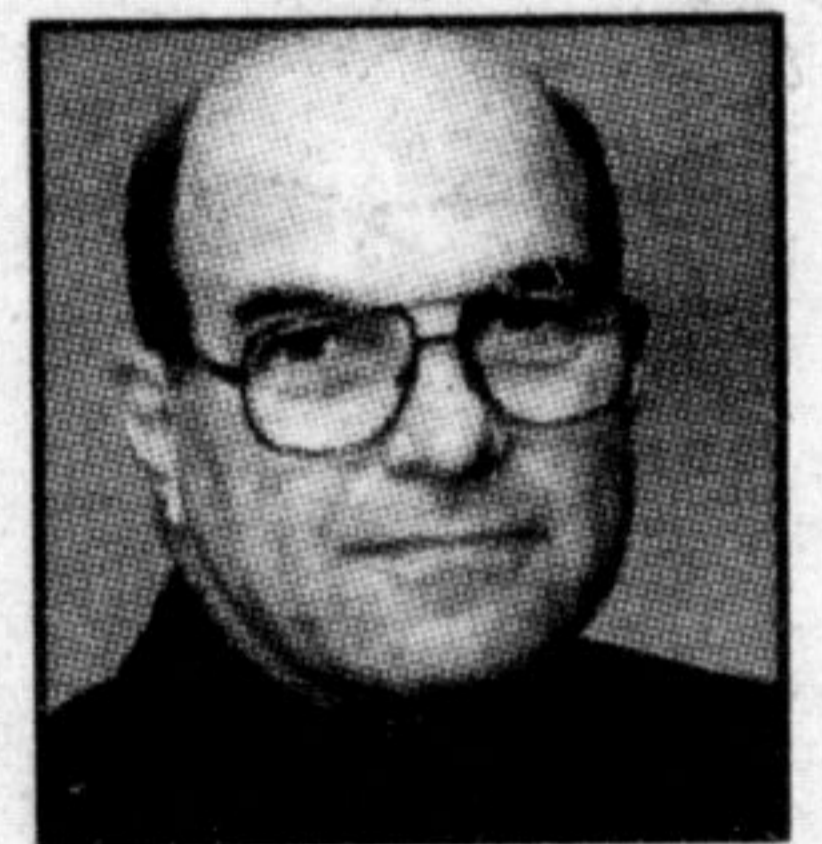
Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Skating we go

Milton Skating Club's Cara McGilloway entertains onlookers as the lead in the group's season-ending 'Alice in Wonderland' carnival at John Tonelli Sports Centre Sunday. See another photo from the event in Sports on page 26.

Deoni case postponed once again

The lawyer for a local Catholic school trustee charged with fraud requested and was granted an extension to the case that has already dragged on for more than two years.



Joe Deoni

Joe Deoni, who was charged with fraud over \$5,000 in March, 1998, appeared briefly in Superior Court in Milton Monday.

His lawyer, Peter DiMartino, asked that the pre-trial date be pushed back until May 30. The trial is set for September 5. The court granted the request.

Assistant Crown attorney Tony MacKinnon said he couldn't say why the case was postponed, only that the defence asked for the extension.

"We've been ready to go on with this for a long time," Mr. MacKinnon said. "We're ready to proceed. It's in the public

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Seatbelt blitz ongoing

Police hope to encourage the 10 per cent of motorists who still don't wear seatbelts to buckle up through their two-week Spring Seatbelt Campaign.

"The police community cannot understand why so many people would risk their lives by not buckling up," said Insp. Kathy Rippey of the OPP's Provincial Traffic and Marine Safety Bureau.

The campaign carried out by the OPP and Halton Regional Police is currently underway and runs until April 15. The focus is on enforcement and education.

In 1999, the OPP checked more than 660,000 vehicles and more than 10,000 people were charged.

OPP statistics also showed about 30 per cent of drivers and 34 per cent of passengers killed in accidents weren't wearing seatbelts.

"Don't risk your children's lives," Insp. Rippey said. "A child safety seat properly installed and used every time you travel is a lifesaver."

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