

OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Pond committee's ending unfortunate: Duignan

Dear Editor:

Re: Mill Pond Restoration Project

I would like to thank reporter Irene Gentle for her article in the March 31 Champion, which was fairly even-handed. However, there were a couple of issues raised in the story and at council that require some clarification in order to set the record straight.

Long before the Mill Pond Committee was formed, numerous individuals expressed their concern over the declining state of the pond, many of whom expressed their concern to town councillors. Personally, I presented Councillor Art Melanson with a set of photos displaying the horrid pond conditions. These were circulated at council and I suppose these concerns were passed on to Town staff to address.

Also, one citizen sent a letter to the mayor asking for action to be taken on the Mill Pond. This letter was passed on to Town staff to look into. In a responding letter, staff's position was that there was no problem and the Mill Pond in its present state was a natural ecosystem. Many citizens disagreed and felt that action must be taken. This is when citizens decided to organize and lobby Town Hall.

A committee under the auspices of the Downtown Business Improvement Area was formed, enlisting numerous citizens and experts in the field. Early on, staff joined the committee in order to help coordinate the efforts of citizens, various provincial ministries, regulatory bodies

and the Town of Milton.

While it's true that early meetings certainly had their bumpy moments, the committee got down to work, decided what needed to be done and drew up a game plan. To their credit, Town staff did change their views on the Mill Pond. Far from being a mob that stormed the Bastille, the Mill Pond Committee was a high-calibre body that in hindsight we are lucky to have had. The citizens on the committee included many with degrees specifically suited to the pond project. Many dollars were saved by the voluntary efforts of these individuals. I will not list your names. You know who you are and you didn't do it for the publicity.

On behalf of the people of Milton, I would like to thank all of you. And a couple of individuals I will name because quite simply they didn't have to get involved. Andy Gemza, inland lakes specialist for the Ministry of Environment, and Warren May of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Far from being anonymous, regulatory civil servant types, Andy and Warren embraced the cause with dedication and enthusiasm.

Contrary to the view expressed, the Mill Pond Committee worked well. And contrary to a view expressed at council, the committee was not responsible for the length of time the project was taking. Anyone who attended even one meeting could attest to the committee's dedication to get the job done as quickly as possible. Red tape is red tape, and the committee

had no part in its creation. It's just sad that the committee had no further significant role to play past the tendering process. It's also indeed unfortunate that the committee ended as it did. Hindsight is 20-20, but in retrospect, a short delay to consult the committee as to what staff was going to present to council would have likely allayed many concerns.

As well, the document presented to council was short on details and contained worrisome allowances for amendments to the original project. I realize that council is the final arbiter on such decisions and I would like to thank them for allowing me to address some concerns at such a late hour. After a couple of questions and answers many concerns were allayed. The deep water fish refuge was still part of the project and it was confirmed that all the pond's sediments would be removed in order to eradicate the vegetation infestation that has been choking the Mill Pond.

That was the primary concern brought to council — that the project was the same as envisaged by the committee and thereby would have the best odds of success in fixing the Mill Pond.

John Duignan
Margaret Street

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