

# Smoke-free bylaw too hurtful to businesses and groups: opponents

By MURRAY TOWNSEND  
Special to The Champion

Force smokers to butt out and you force us out of business.

That was the message relayed to the Milton Smoking Bylaw Review Committee Wednesday night at Hugh Foster Hall as concerned groups and individuals had an opportunity to air their concerns.

Councillor Rick Malboeuf, who chaired the informal public session, said the mandate of the committee was to come up with a consensus and present it to town council, which will vote on it in late April.

There was a council resolution to make Milton smoke-free by May 30, 2002, but Councillor Malboeuf indicated that now, at the very least, there will be changes to the existing bylaws. What's yet to be determined is, "how much of a change, how far we go and how quickly we go."

Almost everybody who spoke represented a bingo interest. Don Corker from the Knights of Columbus noted that in 14 years the organization raised \$400,000 for charity from bingo — and paid \$55,000 in license fees to the Town of Milton.

Rita Ward from the Milton District Hospital Auxiliary told of how \$217,000 had been raised from bingo since 1990 to benefit the hospital.

Del Oxford spoke on behalf of the Navy League and said how the organization had become self-supporting by necessity and how bingo had put 300 kids through its program. Mr. Oxford is also the president of the Bingo Charities Association. "It would be a fatal blow to the hall," he told The Champion. "Other communities that have banned smoking have shut halls."

Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo are currently 100 percent smoke-free, said Mr. Oxford. "We're getting these people's customers in our hall, and it's only a short distance from here to the Mississauga-Brampton area."

Instead of trying to get money from the Town for programs, Mr. Oxford said the organization is putting money into the Town's coffers. Take away bingo and that reverses.

Most of the bingo representatives favour a by-law exemption for bingo and the addition of Designated Smoking Rooms (DSRs).

But that's not good enough, according to Burgess Hawkins, public health inspector for the Region and a newcomer to the smoking wars, having just taken a spot on the committee two weeks ago.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the good that smoke-filled bingo halls do

for the community financially, he agreed their focus is on the physical health of Halton residents, not charitable concerns.

He said of DSRs, "The health effect of second-hand smoke is still severe, that's our main concern. Unfortunately, it's a toxin. DSRs basically concentrate the problem — and people who have to go in and service the area are subject to smoke."

Roger Mason, who's on the committee and represents bars and restaurants in Milton, is in favour of doing nothing at this time. "The only way is an absolute total level playing field."

If people can't get what they want here they'll go where they can get it and take their dollars and patronage out of our community, suggested Mr. Mason, also noting that people here will lose jobs.

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# Martindale Gardens moving along

Martindale Gardens is one step closer to becoming reality.

Councillors on the Town's administration and planning committee unanimously approved the development of the 77-suite, four-storey, assisted-living facility at Monday's meeting.

"We're here, we're ready to go. It's been a long haul for a community group to get to this point," said Brad Clements, vice-chair of the Milton Millennium Community Residences

(MMCR), which operates Martindale Gardens.

Mr. Clements appeared before councillors to seek approval for construction of the non-profit residence to be located at 45 Martin St.

The 77-unit residence will provide housing and care for seniors who can't live independently but don't require a nursing home environment.

Mr. Clements said the board of directors for MMCR will apply

for a building permit as soon as town council approves the construction of the facility.

A technical report by the planning and development department needs to be brought before council before final approval is granted.

MMCR raised the \$9 million needed for construction in January.

Machinery was brought in to clean up the site over the past two months.

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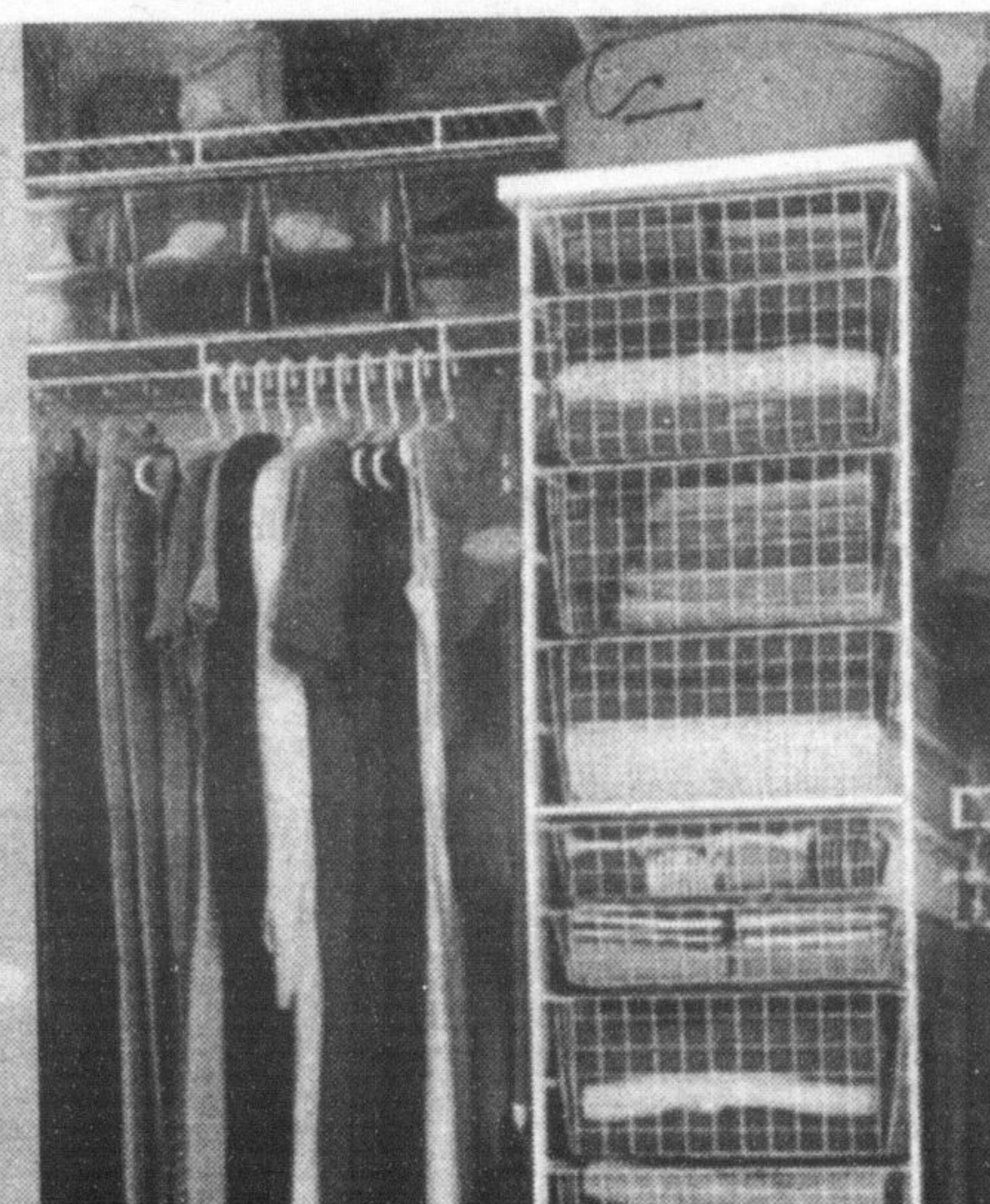
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