



# COMMENT



## THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## We just can't give up quest to hit the target

The Champion's Christmas Bureau Fund for the Salvation Army still needs a big push over the next few days if this year's goal is to be reached.

At press time yesterday, \$18,288 had been raised in the campaign, which ensures all local families have a nice Christmas complete with dinner and toys for the children. And surplus donations help keep the food bank stocked throughout the year.

A lot more help is needed, however, if this year's goal of \$25,000 is to be reached. Last year, just shy of \$25,000 was raised.

We can't give up trying to reach our goal.

Since the December 24 deadline is almost here, please drop off donations in person at our office, 191 Main St. E. If you can't get here until the weekend, you can drop your cheque payable to the Christmas Bureau Fund through the mail slot at the front door.

Donations of non-perishable food and toys would also be greatly appreciated.

The deadline is just four days away, but we know, like always, Miltonians will come through.

## Council Chambers sometimes resembled a circus

From a news standpoint, this has been an entertaining year for local municipal politics.

We've had internal accusations of abuse of position, backtracking over policy and a fat council raise, not to mention the political fiasco also known as the smoking bylaw.

While these actions have a real impact on people in the community, our local politicians have reduced the issues to caricatures.

Let's take a look at the circus around the smoking bylaw. We have a Town that banned smoking in all bars and restaurants. Then it took so long to enforce it — assuming it has started by now — that numerous businesses went against it and profited while law-abiding businesses suffered.

Then, when law-abiding bar owners asked the Town to either enforce it (that was the first request) or repeal it, councillors became so caught up in the procedural mud that nothing was done at all.

Next, we had some serious back peddling related to policy revisions of the group homes bylaw. After public outcry over the establishment of a group home on Victoria Street in 2001, council went through the process of proposing massive changes to the bylaw that would have seen tighter restrictions and public involvement — a knee-jerk reaction if there's ever been one.

But this year, council was forced to back track on the issue — and rightfully so. It seems the initial knee-jerk reaction forgot about all the good group homes do and catered to the fears of residents.

The bylaw is now much as it was before — the Town doesn't really have the authority to do what councillors initially proposed.

In addition to the typical mudslinging around Council Chambers (Challinor, Malboeuf, I'm looking at you two specifically), we also had our share of wild accusations and alleged misleading



*From my perspective*  
with RICHARD VIVIAN

of the public.

I'm talking about the mess over Councillor John Challinor's donation-seeking flyer for the Friends of E.C. Drury Park.

The flyer — which was circulated in January — sought donations to retire the Friends' debt related to an Ontario Municipal Board challenge of development on the Drury lands.

Contained on the flyer were the Town's corpo-

rate name, address and contact information.

While it's understandable that inclusion of the Town's name and address could have been misleading to some residents, Councillor Rick Malboeuf deemed it a deliberate attempt to convince residents the Town supported the group.

For more than two weeks we saw the two councillors square off in debate over both the flyer and residents' intelligence to understand — each claiming the public was easily confused by the other's tactics.

In the end, the accusations and claims died down. It turned out the flyer didn't break council's code of conduct — it didn't have one.

And who could forget Mr. Malboeuf's comments when council gave itself a 37 per cent raise. "I don't support it, but I'll take it."

Ah... if only I could patent the character rights for television. Milton council is a cartoon that would give The Simpsons a run for its money.

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Holidays can be a particularly dangerous time for fires, warns Ontario Fire Marshal

Dear Editor:

While the month of December is traditionally a time for families to come together and enjoy the festive season, it's also a time of year when we see a marked increase in the number of fatal fires. For Ontario fire departments, December through March is, without a doubt, the deadliest time of the year.

Last year on December 25, a Toronto family, like thousands of others, sat down to enjoy Christmas dinner. That night, the family awoke to a blazing fire that destroyed the house and claimed the lives of an 18-year-old and his 14-year-old sister.

This tragic fire last Christmas

Day is just one heartbreaking example of how easily a celebration can turn into disaster. No one can afford to dismiss a home fire as something that happens to someone else.

Survive the holidays with these simple fire prevention steps:

- Smoking or cooking while under the influence of alcohol are serious fire risks. Drink responsibly and keep an eye on those who don't.

- Smokers' materials are a leading cause of fatal fires. If you must smoke indoors, make sure all cigarettes and matches are fully extinguished. Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children.

- Keep candles in a sturdy holder

away from children, pets and combustible materials.

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test your smoke alarms every month.

- Create and practise a home escape plan with your family. Know two ways out of all areas in case your main exit is blocked.

No one needs to die in a fire. The fire department will do its very best to protect you if a fire occurs, but ultimately your family's safety is your responsibility.

Have a fire-safe holiday season.

**Bernard Moyle**  
Ontario Fire Marshal