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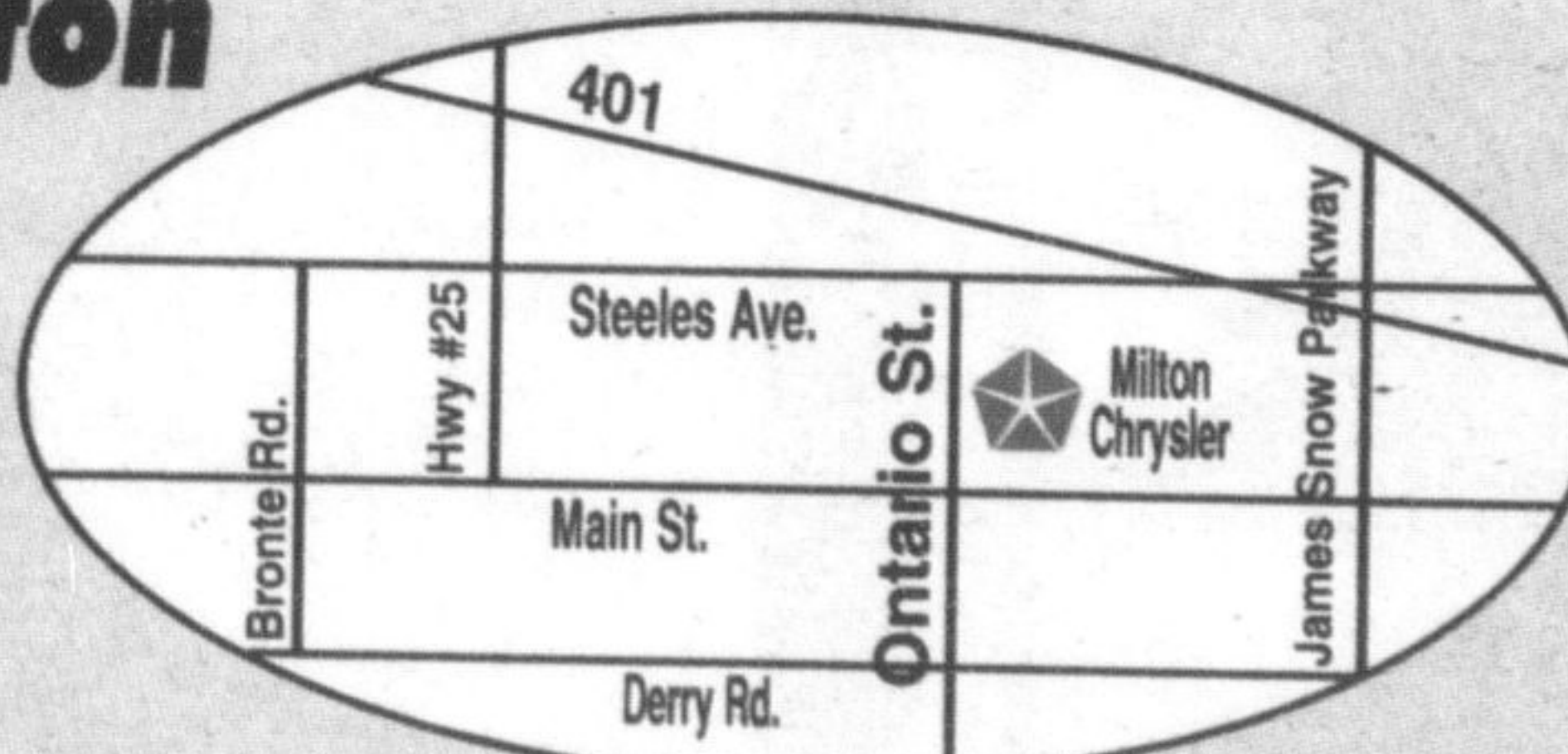
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Town hires private investigators to go after bylaw violators

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

Meet Milton's newest weapon in the war against bar and business owners flouting the smoking bylaw — private investigators.

Milton began contracting out investigators three weeks ago to help bylaw officers enforce the no-smoking bylaw, which states bars and restaurants must be smoke-free.

The workload to enforce the bylaw has been heavy since it came into effect last May and help was needed, said Roy Smith, municipal bylaw enforcement officer for the Town of Milton. There are two full-time bylaw officers.

Mr. Smith wouldn't divulge anything specific about the investigators — including how many there are — for obvious reasons.

"We've been inundated with complaints," he said about the smoking bylaw. "We've tried other alternatives which didn't work out and I'm not at liberty to talk about. So we've taken this tactic and we're going to go with it for a while."

So far this year the Town has already laid 16 charges against five businesses. Last year a total of 12 charges were laid against three businesses.

The hired guns don't issue tickets or lay charges. Mr. Smith said reports are compiled and handed over to the Town's bylaw department which assesses the information

and decides if warnings or charges should be laid against bar or restaurant owners, not the smokers themselves.

"We have trained people and they're going to make observations and based on those observations, we will lay charges when appropriate," Mr. Smith said.

He said the contracting of investigators is a "short-term project" and he wasn't sure how long it would continue.

And while smoking charges continue to be laid, another challenge the Town faces is the fact that charges must be heard in court, and that can take months to conclude, Mr. Smith said.

The smoking bylaw — and smoking generally — continues to be in the spotlight.

Last month Milton councillors asked staff to look at creating a bylaw that would allow designated smoking rooms (DSRs) in bars and restaurants. Councillors would still have to vote on the bylaw to make DSRs legal.

Regional council is looking into the idea of a region-wide smoking bylaw after Oakville Councillor Jeff Knoll asked staff for a report outlining what the legal process would be to do re-open talks. Each of the four municipalities has its own smoking bylaw.

And Halton's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Bob Nosal, believes the Ontario government should impose a province-wide smoking bylaw to help curb smoking, especially among young people.



**THE CORPORATION OF THE
TOWN OF MILTON**

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ON-LINE**

<http://www.town.milton.on.ca>

TAX NOTICE

Ratepayers of the Town of Milton are reminded that the first installment of the 2003 interim billing is due on Feb 28, 2003.

If you require information about taxes, please contact the Corporate Services (Tax) Department at (905) 878-7252, ext. 2193, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Tax payments must be received in the Corporate Services Office on or before the due date to avoid penalty. A late payment charge of 1 1/4% will be charged on the first day of default and on the first day of each calendar month in which the default continues.

It is the responsibility of the ratepayer to ensure that the taxes are paid by the due date, even in the event that the bill is not received as mailed.

Taxes may be paid:

- By mail to the Corporate Services (Tax) Department, 43 Brown St., Milton, ON L9T 5H2
Cheques post-dated to the due date are acceptable and encouraged.
- Telephone or Internet banking (check with your financial institution for details).
- By using the mail deposit box to the left of the glass doors at Town Hall (all hours).
- Between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Corporate Services (Tax) Department, Town Hall, 43 Brown Street, Milton. (Cheque or money order is preferred rather than cash) Direct Debit also accepted.
- Please contact our office for details regarding the Pre-Authorized Tax Payment Program.