

Comment

It's just plain wrong

We have used this space often to belabour the point that smoking is a horrible (sometimes fatal) habit, it's a drain on our health care system and if smokers were hit with a \$20-a-pack tax we wouldn't shed a tear.

Having said that, the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision to allow Provinces to sue tobacco companies for the high cost of treating smoking-related illnesses is ill conceived and, well, just plain wrong.

It's wrong because the last time we checked smoking is legal. This ruling smacks of hypocrisy. Think about it for a minute. Our federal and provincial governments gleefully rake in billions of tax dollars thanks to smokers and now will be allowed to hit up tobacco firms for the health-related problems associated with smoking. Does that really make sense?

If our various levels of government truly cared about the health and welfare of this nation's citizens, they would have banned smoking outright when evidence of the dangers of lighting up became

abundantly clear decades ago.

But they didn't.

It doesn't make sense for the government on one hand to be quietly reaping the rewards of smoking, then bleeding the companies that produce the product.

If our politicians can hold tobacco firms responsible for the burgeoning health costs associated with smoking then they should do the same for the alcohol industry and the heavy social costs associated with gambling addictions. There's simply no difference.

Similar court rulings and legislation have already led to a massive settlement south of the border and Canadian provinces are sure to try to reach similar outcomes with tobacco firms here. Whether the tobacco companies have the backbone (or money) for this type of fight is uncertain.

What is undeniable is, that when millions of dollars are dangled before the eyes of politicians, it's likely they will choose to ignore the morally right path.



Our Readers Write

Recent column on farming accurate and appreciated

Dear Editor:

I'd like to compliment Champion reporter Melanie Hennessey on her recent column entitled 'Three cheers for those who put food on our tables'.

In my opinion, the column was accurate and to the point, including the part about pesticides. We farmers use pesticides only because we want to stay in business, and all pesticides used by Canadian farmers are government approved.

It's a battle to try to make a living from

farming these days. In general, Canadians don't respect the need for a Canadian food supply.

By contrast, American and European governments respect the contribution their farmers make to their respective societies. They show their respect by providing adequate farm subsidies, which in turn provide inexpensive food for all of society.

In 1975, Canadian farmers carried a collective debt of \$7.8 billion and enjoyed a collective net income of \$3.3 billion. In

2005, the collective debt is \$47.7 billion and Canadian farmers are on track to post a negative income of \$2 billion. This is reality for Canadian farmers.

It's very difficult to be optimistic about the future of many Canadian farm products when we're not working on a level playing field with our American and European competitors.

Will federal, provincial and municipal governments one day respect Canadian farmers for their contribution to society, or will we become an importer of many food products that we can successfully produce in Canada?

The economic time clock is quickly ticking away.

Thanks again to Champion reporter Melanie Hennessey for her realistic point of view.

Bert Andrews
Andrews' Scenic Acres

Be sure to include your name, address and telephone number when submitting a letter to the editor for publication.

More discussion needed to create shared vision for Milton

Dear Editor:

Over the past few years in its letters to the editor section, The Champion has published a darn good cross-section of readers' views and thoughts relating to Milton's future — our future.

It appears that many of us have a pretty clear vision of what we think Milton should look like over the next little while.

Vision is a truly great thing, yet it only turns into reality when individuals' thoughts are constructively discussed in an open forum, built on and then harmonized with the views of others.

Everybody has good ideas, but there needs to be discussion so as to end up with a shared and common vision. It's only when a town's vision actually belongs to the citizens of that town that people's dreams have a chance of becoming reality.

Every citizen of Milton — be they newcomers or not — has a valued say in what we want to see Milton look like. It's not only what politicians want that's important — it's what we as the voting and taxpaying citizens of Milton want that really matters. Let's not forget that we elect our politicians.

This is our town and our future. Are we part of its direction or are we just the followers? The choice is clearly ours. Speak your mind and share your thoughts.

Bob Beyette
Milton

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