

# OPINION

## Fine just not enough

An interesting ruling came down last week involving the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and a north Halton man found responsible for posting hate propaganda.

Craig Harrison, 40, has been entangled in a web of trouble after authoring messages on the Internet that can best be described as hateful garbage.

So appalled and disgusted by Harrison's virulence, Ottawa lawyer Richard Warman decided to take the case to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Obviously, the tribunal shared the same concerns.

"The call for violence toward aboriginals, francophones, blacks and other non-whites, as well as attacks on other groups and individuals based on their religion, colour, national or ethnic origin using racial slurs and degrading stereotypes does not constitute legitimate political debate. It promotes hatred and contempt," wrote tribunal chair Michel Doucet.

Doucet said the posted messages show Harrison is "being led by his ill-conceived views of society and his incapacity to accept others."

But despite the seriousness of his findings, Doucet levied a mere \$1,000 fine, noting there had been no new postings since 2004 and that most of the messages were written in a relatively short period of time. Really, a \$1,000 fine? That's no deterrent.

Readers should also understand that Harrison is no stranger to controversy. He spent two years in jail when he was convicted in 1996 of assault causing bodily harm after attacking an Asian man — a Georgetown shopkeeper — while shouting racial slurs.

In today's society that's so full of mistrust and, yes, hatred, we need to do far more as a country than hand out \$1,000 fines for home-grown intolerance. Stiff jail sentences and hefty fines would be a start.



## ReadersWrite

Send your letters to [miltoneid@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltoneid@haltonsearch.com) or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

## There was no conflict of interest in sale of home

### DEAR EDITOR:

In 1977, the Halton County Court House — now Milton Town Hall — was slated for demolition. A group of 'heritage people', now the Milton Historical Society, banded together to stop it.

They succeeded. The Town bought the buildings for \$1 and \$3 million later we have a priceless treasure. Was it worth it? I think so.

My business partner and I were on a committee involved in the restoration of Waldie's Blacksmith Shop, a building many people thought should be demolished. With the financial support of local citizens, the Milton Community Fund and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, it was lovingly restored.

This meant five years of volunteer work and no profit at the end, but it was rewarding in that Miltonians will enjoy it for a hundred more years to come. Visitors from all over North America and Europe have visited the blacksmith shop. Was it worth it? I think so.

Lora Brittain asked in a recent letter, "If a home isn't designated a heritage home, then why not just demolish it?"

Only a handful of buildings in Milton — approximately 13 — are designated heritage homes. Imagine if most of the homes on Victoria Street, Mill Street, Thomas Street, Lydia Street and so on were gone to make way for new housing. Thank goodness they're owned by 'heritage people'.

When a house is in bad condition, it's hard to see the value of it, but when someone with vision lovingly pours their heart and soul into restoring it the whole community benefits.

Thousands of people flock to Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Jacobs and Unionville. Why? There must be a lot of 'heritage people' who get great pleasure in taking in the beauty these heritage towns have to offer. Heritage build-

ings are a source of inspiration for artists, writers, photographers and entrepreneurs. Does this not benefit and enrich our society?

Over the years, Heritage Milton has put together a catalogue of some of Milton's architecturally and culturally-significant homes that aren't designated under the Act, and 155 and 167 Mary St. are in this inventory.

In March of 2004, the Town of Milton — the owner of the two houses — had an independent heritage assessment done by heritage planning consultant Paul Dilse, professional engineer and wood technologist James Knight and architects Peter Stewart and George Rob. This is a process that must be followed before an inventoried building can be demolished.

The recommendation was that the houses be left in their original location, which Heritage Milton unanimously supported, but failing that, they should be moved in the neighbourhood or as close as possible.

Sedgwick Marshall is a small business. We buy and restore old homes because we're passionate about them. We love what we do, we work hard and hope to make a profit at the end — with no apologies to anyone.

Regarding the two Mary Street houses, both were advertised for sale in the spring of 2005, and at that time we were hoping someone else would take up the challenge to save and restore the two houses. It wasn't until early 2006 when there appeared to be little to no interest in the houses that we decided to try and at least save the circa-1867 Regency Cottage.

Yes, we paid \$1 for the house and the Town paid for the move, which wasn't too much more than it would have cost to demolish the building. That's not an unusual procedure in the world of heritage homes.

Our investment was considerably steeper.

We paid for a host property that had a house on it, hired an architect, did a heritage assessment of the house to be demolished, demolished the house and put in a new foundation. And that's not to mention the hours of planning and preparation to ensure the move went smoothly, including dealing with mortgage payments, interest payments and insurance.

This was all done before we even had a house. Once the house was moved to the sight the restoration began. Since we don't have a union to protect our interests, we have to hope that at the end of the project the market will support the sale of the house and we get a paycheque. That's a huge risk.

As far as Brittain's accusations that because of my volunteer position on Heritage Milton, I had a conflict of interest and that I had some kind of inside information, I can assure you there was no conflict of interest. I wasn't even in Canada when these decisions were made.

The information discussed at the meetings is available to anyone who wishes to access it. We submitted a proposal just like anyone else could have, and had to go through the same process that Brittain will have to go through if she's interested in purchasing any property from the Town of Milton.

Brittain says it's easy to be rude when you have no respect for people, but it's ignorance that breeds rudeness. I don't know if my attempt to explain this issue will fall on deaf ears or closed minds, but as far as I'm concerned the Town of Milton acted in the most professional manner — from the mayor right down to the yard workers.

I hope Brittain will put her unfounded accusations to rest once and for all.

**MIRELLA MARSHALL  
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The Canadian Champion  
Milton's Community Newspaper Since 1860

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Classified: 905-875-3300  
Circulation: 905-878-5947  
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The Canadian Champion, published every Tuesday and Friday at 875 Main St. E., Milton, Ont., L9T 3Z3, is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd. community newspapers.

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