

# OPINION

## Gun crime needs a tougher stand

*Dion's objection to Tory plan for longer sentences not exactly encouraging*

Ontarians, specifically those in the Greater Toronto Area, are getting their first up-close look at Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion in action this week as the Grits' boss tours the area in what could be an election practice run.

Dion, who will spend the next few days in the area — including a stop at Milton's Country Heritage Park today — has targeted the area, identified as a prime population growth spot in this week's Census, primarily because of its richness in votes.

By most accounts Dion is a "nice guy" who, perhaps while lacking the bravado of predecessors Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, faces a tougher job than those two of selling himself to Ontario voters as a potential prime minister simply because of his lower profile.

One charge Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservatives have levelled at Dion and the Liberals is that they are "soft on crime" and, judging by Dion's opening day on the Ontario tour, one would be hard-pressed to disagree.

Dion said Wednesday that he would support Harper's efforts to make it harder for people arrested on gun crimes to get bail. In effect, he would support the Conservatives' measure that would require accused gun offenders to justify why they should be released on bail — the so-called "reverseonus" provision.

However, Dion drew the line on backing the Tories' plan for tougher and longer sentences for some crimes.

"It will not be effective," said Dion. "(We) will have a higher incarceration rate, but not a lower crime rate."

While it's true the incarceration rates would likely climb, we have a hard time seeing the negatives of keeping criminals — particularly those using guns — in prison longer. Certainly Dion's promises of more police and RCMP officers and a crackdown on identity and Internet crime are welcome, but people who choose to use guns in committing crimes should pay a higher price than what is currently being handed out.

Perhaps, however, Dion has a better idea. If so, we'd love to hear it. Maybe new Grit and Halton MP Garth Turner can help his boss come up with a solution.

## DISAPPEARING MAMMALS...



## ReadersWrite

Send your letters to [miltoneid@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltoneid@haltonsearch.com).

### Turner's openness quite refreshing

**DEAR EDITOR:**

On March 7, I attended my very first town hall meeting, held by our local MP, Garth Turner.

Until recently I had lived in Toronto for my entire life, and in all that time I barely remember more than one occasion when my MP held a meeting for local constituents.

From my discussions with other people in the Halton riding, I understand Turner has in fact held well over two dozen town hall meetings in the past year.

At his most recent meeting, Turner

patiently listened to the constituents in the room and provided his thoughts and insights on issues of importance to the people of Halton.

What impressed me most about Turner was his openness with the constituents in the room about his move from sitting as an independent MP for several months to becoming a member of the Liberal caucus.

He was candid and honest, and in today's politically volatile world it was indeed a refreshing sight.

**BEN FRIEDLAND  
MILTON**

## Aroundtown

### I love Milton's growth, I love it not, I love Milton's...

I'm not a big fan of change. I was distressed when they changed the shape of the Kraft Dinner noodles (ever notice they're way more curved than they used to be?).

When I hear that Milton's expected to have a population of about 100,000 in the next 15 years, I feel uneasy.

The 2006 Census released Tuesday reports Milton is the fastest growing community in Canada, with a rate of 71.4 per cent in the past five years.

Growth has consequences, many of which residents are already feeling.

With the development of the Milton Crossroads shopping centre, some retailers in downtown Milton are reporting far less foot traffic. All it takes is one look at the quick turnover rate of stores near Main and Martin streets to realize the disintegration of Milton's historic core is a real possibility.

And with a bigger population comes an increase in crime. It wasn't long ago that I was reporting on a string of robberies at local gas stations. Then, in quick succession, came a murder, a sexual assault of a 13-year-old girl and a couple of fatal collisions in which impaired driving may be involved.

When I talk with long-time Miltonians about the way things used to be, I yearn for the good old days I wasn't even here to see.

Then reality hits.

I'm enjoying the new movie theatre and Wal-Mart as much as the next Miltonian.

Growth isn't all bad. In fact, couldn't we look at the recent Census information as a compliment to our town? Other people are realizing what we already know: Milton is a

special place.

And if growth means we get a Chapters or Second Cup, I'm all for it.

What we need is balance. I don't think anyone wants unbridled growth. But neither can we live in the past, bristling at any sign of development.

Growth and all that comes with it may be slightly out of our control — particularly with the Province's Places to Grow plan — but keeping Milton's charm isn't.

What can we do? Shop the downtown core as well as the power centre. Get to know your neighbours and welcome newcomers. Join in community activities.

Change isn't always bad. Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's just different.



Stephanie Thiessen

The Canadian Champion  
Milton's Community Newspaper Since 1860

875 Main St. E.,  
Milton, Ont. L9T 3Z3

**905-878-2341**

Editorial Fax: 905-878-4943

Advertising Fax: 905-876-2364

Classified: 905-875-3300

Circulation: 905-878-5947

[www.miltoncanadianchampion.com](http://www.miltoncanadianchampion.com)

**Publisher**  
Neil Oliver

**Advertising Director**  
Wendy McNab

**Managing Editor**  
Karen Miceli

**Production Manager**  
Tim Coles

**Circulation Manager**  
Charlene Hall

**Office Manager**  
Teri Casas

The Canadian Champion, published every Tuesday and Friday at 875 Main St. E., Milton, Ont., L9T 3Z3, is a division of Metroland Media Group Ltd. — Group Publisher Ian Oliver.

Advertising is accepted on the condition that, in the event of a typographical error, that portion of the advertising space occupied by the erroneous item, together with a reasonable allowance for signature, will not be charged for, but the balance of the advertisement will be paid for at the applicable rate. The publisher reserves the right to categorize advertisements or decline.

CCAB Audited

Recognized for excellence by

Ontario Community Newspapers Association

Canadian Community Newspapers Association

Suburban Newspapers of America

The Canadian Champion is a proud media sponsor for:

Halton Healthcare Child Find ONTARIO

WELCOME WAGON LTD. SINCE 1930 Jingle Bell Fund MILTON CANADA DAY

UNITED WAY OF MILTON TV AUCTION MILTON SANTA CLAUS PARADE

YMCA OF OAKVILLE

ATHENA Awards The Oakville, Milton and District Boat Excursion POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Showcase Milton GALA Awards FAO

MILTON GALA Awards FAO

The Milton Canadian Champion is a Recyclable Product