

Citizen advisory group issue raised at meeting

What kind of input should town councillors have?

By Christina Commisso
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

What kind of input should town councillors have on citizen committees?

The issue was raised during last week's council meeting with some arguing that councillors using their positions to influence the decisions made at the committee level defeats the purpose of citizen advisory groups.

The issue stems from an argument that took place during a Community Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) meeting — the group charged with allocating who gets what in the \$250,000 Milton Community Fund.

CSAC is made up of a chair, nine members of the public and two councillors, Arnold Huffman and Mike Chuet.

During an October meeting, the group was to decide whether or not it supports the creation of a \$100,000 new category in the community fund exclusively for Milton service groups.

Councillor Rick Malboeuf attended the meeting and spoke against the idea.

Huffman, who drafted the service group proposal early this year, said: "Council debated and voted to have that decision go before this committee (CSAC) which is a citizens advisory committee."

"This is a committee of our citizens that can discuss amongst themselves what they wish to do and not to be influenced by the mayor or any member of council."

Huffman said that during the October meeting Malboeuf spoke to the committee as a councillor, not as a member of the public.

"Now it becomes councillors arguing yay or nay in front of the committee. I think it's embarrassing, it's defeatist and it goes against

the democratic process," he said.

However, Malboeuf said it's the right of council to attend any committee, community or board meeting. "It has never been a problem before and it should not change now."

The committee eventually voted against the creation of a new service group category, but recommended an additional \$100,000 go into the fund.

Huffman asked that the committee's decision be deferred until CSAC hears a presentation from the presidents of Milton's service clubs in the new year. Council passed the motion and voted that no councillor, even those on CSAC, will be allowed to attend that particular meeting.

While the majority of council voted to continue allowing councillors to attend and participate in citizen advisory meetings, the issue of politicizing public committees was raised.

Councillor Cindy Lunau said the CSAC committee is unique because it deals with funding allocations.

"When it comes to council participation on other committees, it's not nearly as sensitive. If a councillor intends to appear at a meeting, it should be acknowledged to other council members. If we're going to make these advisory committees political, make them political," she said.

She continued, "if we all start attending all the advisory committees we will soon outnumber the citizens on these committees."

However, the majority of councillors said participating in committee meetings is what they were elected to do.

"We have residents who contact us about concerns. I cannot agree with not participating," said Councillor Colin Best. "Part of the job is to participate. Around this table we have an array of experiences and talents, etc. We are making a mountain over a molehill."

Christina Commisso can be reached at ccommisso@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Captain pleased with amount raised

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we anticipated reaching the goal, but as we got going time seemed to be going against us and we realized this probably wasn't going to happen."

The 2010 campaign exceeded the \$180,000

target by \$25,000. But considering that Sally Ann only sets up six Christmas kettles throughout Milton, Wiseman is very happy with the dollars collected.

Christina Commisso can be reached at ccommisso@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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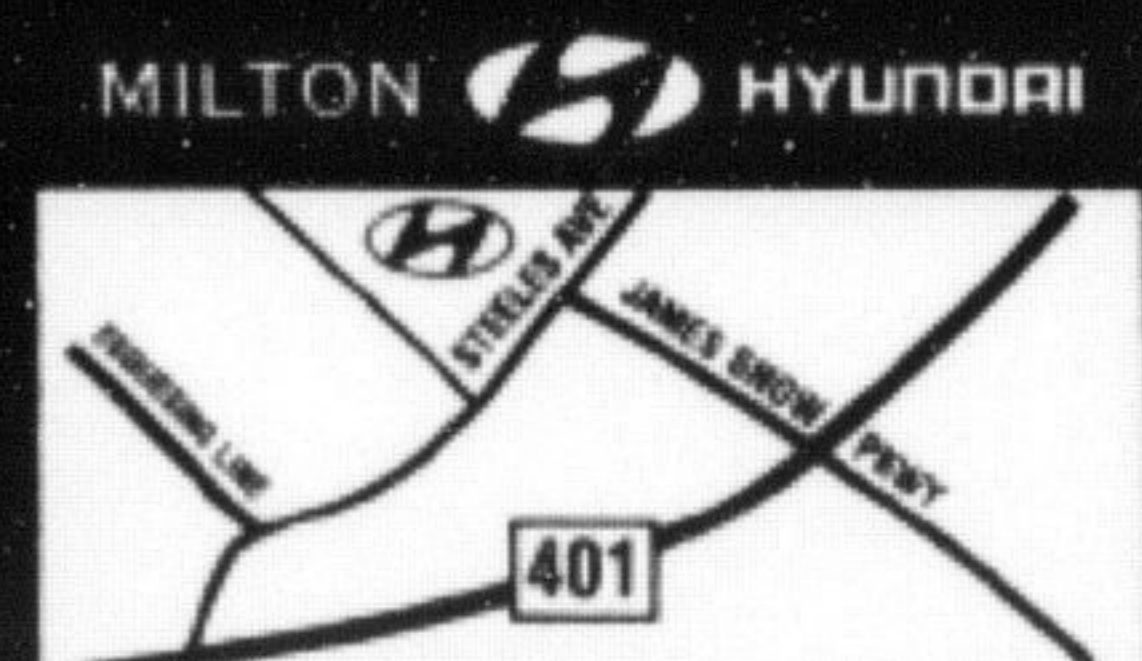
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