

OPINION

System failure

Are you fed up with waiting for an appointment with a medical specialist, an MRI or a medical procedure?

You're not alone.

According to a three-part Metroland Media Group special investigative report — launched in today's *Champion* — an astounding number of Ontarians are being sent south of the Canada/U.S. border in order to receive medical treatment they might not get here for weeks, even months.

And we're talking about thousands of Ontario patients every year.

According to figures uncovered by Metroland journalists, long waits, unavailable procedures and poor physician access has the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) footing the bill for millions of dollars worth of out-of-Canada medical services.

Since the start of this decade, OHIP approvals for out-of-country care have risen 450 per cent — from a total of 2,110 approved procedures in 2001 to 11,775 last year.

In the last five years, the cost of these out-of-country medical visits to OHIP has tripled, from \$56.3 million in 2005, to an anticipated \$164.3 million in 2010.

There are no signs on the horizon that the desperate shortage of access to health care in this province is stabilizing.

In its October economic forecast, the provincial government said it would need to increase health spending by \$700 million to cover "higher than anticipated" OHIP costs, including out-of-province services.

While our government claims to be working toward improving access to health care in Ontario, the Province has had to become a major contractor and bulk buyer of American health services in order to ensure that Ontarians, whose health is at risk, can obtain the care they need as quickly as possible.

There's something fundamentally wrong with this picture.

Once considered the envy of nations around the world, the Canadian approach to health care is no longer working in Ontario. It's time for our leaders to admit the system isn't working, recognize it can't continue this way and then agree to sit down to find a non-partisan cure for a system that's failing — and ailing — all of us.



MAKING TRACKS: Sharon Deery and children Caitlin, Jocelyn and Jacob visit Fisherman's Wharf — with Alcatraz Island in the background — in San Francisco. Take your community newspaper on your next vacation and send your 'Champion Tracks' photos to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Be sure to include destination information and everyone's names.

ReadersWrite

E-mail letters to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Letters, which may be edited, must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

Great support for charity bonspiel

DEAR EDITOR:

On behalf of the United Way of Milton, I wish to thank all of those involved with our curling bonspiel held October 27 at the Milton Curling Club.

This was a first for the United Way of Milton, and we were incredibly pleased with the support of our community. We raised more than \$17,400.

Thank you to our two title sponsors — Union Gas and Mattamy Homes —

and the many other companies and individuals who helped make the event such a success through donations and financial support.

A special thank you goes out to Kate Sherwood, Gayle Harding and Community Living North Halton — for preparing our lunch and dinner — and also for all the support our group received from the Milton Curling Club.

**PAUL CRIPPS, VICE-PRESIDENT
UNITED WAY OF MILTON**

ForanAffairs

Milton not just bad traffic and cheap real estate

During the past year, there have been a few curious things I've come across while working in Milton.

The first is the number of people who move to the community for its quaint downtown, relatively quiet neighbourhoods, and small-town, family-friendly atmosphere but who then proceed to drive everywhere, shop at big box stores, and complain about the morning traffic on the way to Mississauga, Brampton or Toronto.

Second is the number of people who make the largest investment of their lives but don't hire a lawyer or do their own due diligence to find out what the official plan allows for the property next door or what things

their homebuilder must do, rather than promise to do.

And finally, there's still a contingent who say, "No one ever asked me if I wanted all this growth," an odd comment when the man who supported it all — Gord Krantz — is entering his 30th consecutive year as mayor and was first elected before Cyndi Lauper sang *Time After Time*.

Yes, there are negatives to the changes in Milton.

Traffic will never get better; it will only get worse, and don't believe anyone otherwise.

No matter how many regional roads they expand or highway lanes and interchanges that are eventually built, the 401, Derry, Britannia inter alia ain't getting better. Not until some form of road pricing goes into effect.

The GO Train is fine if you're going to Mississauga and Toronto. But GO's not planning for all-day, two-way service to Milton until sometime after 2020, though I'm sure you'll find a politician or two who'll

say it's on its way in a couple of years.

• see TOWN on page A7



Tim Foran

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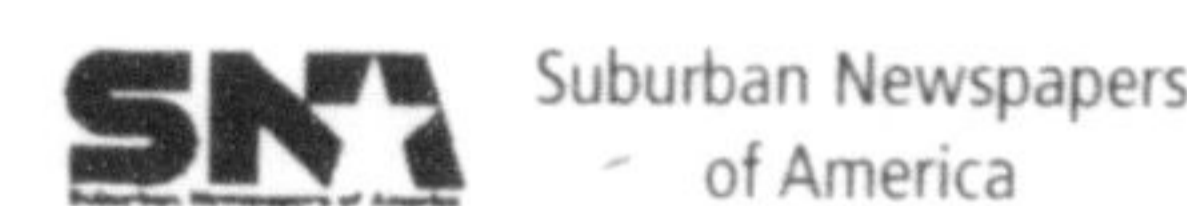
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