



# The Canadian Champion

Milton's Business of the Year for 1989



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## Policing the budget

Who polices the police budget? Not Halton's elected officials, although one must give them credit for trying. The Halton Regional Police Force has proposed a 15 per cent budget hike for 1991, bad enough in good times but worse in the current frosty economic climate, regional councillors reason. And so councillors have struck a committee which, they hope, will suggest ways for the cops to cut some proposed costs. Suggest is the operative word, since council can do little else.

The Halton police commission, a small body made up of two regional councillors and four appointed members from the public, is really the only remotely political group which has consistent input on area police operations. And once the police budget has been presented to regional council for rubber stamping, whatever objections the local commission had have been ironed out behind closed doors.

The true authority over police budgets rests with the Ontario Police Commission, if push comes to political shove. The commission has the final say in police budgets formulated across the province. It can overrule the objections of any municipal politicians.

This is somewhat archaic. Why should the police force, or any agency for that matter, operate under a different set of rules than the rest of the regionally administered services? Even the boards of education, while not under the control of regional councillors, are subject to the supervision of elected officials — school board trustees.

In any organization not controlled by market forces, by competition, there is a tendency to demand more in order to rise to perceived challenges. Police management staff want more personnel. Regional bureaucrats want more money for more programs. The bureaucrats justify such measures, objectively in their own minds anyway, by saying they are responding to public demand. The police brass raise the spectre of increased crime if they don't get what they want.

We must stress that almost everyone who gets caught in such a trap is behaving in a manner which they view as reasonable and honest — we aren't questioning their motives. Indeed, we're saying it's human nature to do as they are doing. The problem is, few checks and balances exist to curb such demands unless elected officials have a mandate to weigh them.

We have substantial confidence in the police department's ability to communicate its funding priorities to elected officials. We also have a great deal of faith in the department's ability to communicate its displeasure with the same elected officials — publicly.

In Halton, especially with chief James Harding at the helm, the police force has shown itself to be commendably self assured in the face of political criticism. Chief Harding once called a regional councillor an "unlearned politician" and then calmly weathered a storm of criticism, including a call for his resignation from another regional councillor.

We would not make the largely autonomous police force a political entity with police management bowing to the whims of elected officials. We rather appreciate the chief being free to label opponents "unlearned" if he so chooses, even if he is wrong.

That part of the system should be kept the way it is. But elected officials deserve to have more input on police budget decisions, because the public deserves that representation. In the final analysis, we are talking about public funds, after all.

## Looking back



Back in October, 1975, Drumquinn kids frolic in what must be the world's largest sandbox. Situated in the school yard of Percy W. Merry School, the sandbox was 25 square feet and surrounded by railway ties sunk into the ground. It was a major project by members of Percy W. Merry Home and School Association.

## Pages of the Past

### One Year Ago

From the October 4, 1989 issue

□ The possibility of a strike loomed large at Maplehurst Correctional Centre. The labour issues included a change in the centre's inmate profile, guard-to-inmate ratios, overcrowding, pensions, and wages.

□ Milton's Leanne Caputo was crowned Miss World Canada in Winnipeg after competing among 25 contestants. As well as the title, she won \$200,000 worth of prizes and a chance to compete in the Miss World Pageant in Hong Kong.

□ Angry homeowners living around Fat Freddy's restaurant heaped criticism on owner Andre St. John at municipal council. They claimed his business turned a quiet neighbourhood into a centre of drunken rowdy behaviour. In turn, Mr. St. John defended his operation, saying its rules were if anything more strict than other bars in town.

□ One of the most controversial pieces of property in Milton again came under the scrutiny of municipal council as a group of local businessmen obtained permission to re-model a church as professional offices. But they didn't get the approval without opposition, as longtime

Milton resident Ivan Slessor told council he would much rather have the former Emmanuel Baptist Church on Commercial Street stay a church, no matter what denomination.

### 20 Years Ago

From the October 7, 1970 issue

□ A bag of dead chickens, an old barn door and the pickup bed of a truck were just a few of the discarded items picked up along the banks of Sixteen Mile Creek in Milton Saturday. Several students from Milton and Acton high schools scoured the banks for litter as part of their fall clean-up.

□ Construction of the new Maplehurst Regional Detention Centre in town should be underway by next summer, Milton Council was informed. The Department of Correctional Services hoped to call tenders by the spring and have construction underway by May or June.

□ A new sewage treatment plant, or an extension to the existing Fulton Street plant, promised to be topics of debate on Milton Council's agenda for the next few months. Council laid more groundwork for expansion of its sewage facilities as it reviewed a report from Ontario Water Resources Commission which warned the town there was only sufficient capacity for another 2,500 people.

### 50 Years Ago

From the October 3, 1940 issue

□ Two Miltonians were victimized by pickpockets at the Halton County Fair. Several hours after attending the fair, James Blain reached into his pocket and discovered that \$7 in cash and a \$50 cheque were missing. Another \$7 was lifted from the hip pocket of Wm. Cowan.

□ A barn, threshing machine, 60 loads of grain and a calf were destroyed by fire at Cameron Winn's farm on Guelph Line, four miles south of Campbellville.

□ Samuel Smith, owner of the Model Knitting Mills of Milton and Toronto, was convicted under the National Registration Regulations. Smith, it was charged, employed Dalhia Peruscollo of Milton Heights. Having failed to notify authorities that she was unregistered, Smith was fined \$25 and costs of \$12.75.

### Pud



by Steve Nease