

Our Readers Write

NDP's daycare intervention unnecessary

Open Letter to:

Marion Boyd, Minister of Community & Social Services; Noel Duignan, MPP; Lyn McLeod, MPP; Cam Jackson, MPP; Halton Region Chairman Peter Pomeroy; Milton Mayor Gord Krantz; Ontario Chamber of Commerce;

On behalf of the Milton Chamber of Commerce, I want to express our concern and frustration as we see the provincial government legislating private daycare owners out of business throughout the province. We believe the impact of this legislation will be almost uniformly detrimental to taxpayers, the workforce, and to the thousands of dislocated parents and children currently using private daycare centres.

By subsidizing non-profit worker wages, with retroactive pay increases across the board from janitors to managers, the Ontario government has made it virtually impossible for private enterprise to be price-competitive. That alone is unfair but the government has gone much further by insisting successful private businesses must convert to non-profit or be forced out of business. And further the government has provided grants enabling non-profit centres to buy out the contents of dissolving private centres.

The Milton Chamber of Commerce has always and will always support free enterprise and the entrepreneurial spirit that makes our country and community viable. We see the provincial government's action as totally counterproductive.

In a time when governments are pushed past the limit in spending deficits, this government has gone ahead unnecessarily with a very expensive undertaking.

In a time when families are struggling to find and keep disappearing jobs, the government is forcing employers out of business and restricting access to daycare. In Halton, 40 per cent of families have chosen to place their children in private daycare. Now those families will have to search desperately for alternative daycare spaces, dislocating children unnecessarily and causing stress to overburdened parents.

In a time when taxpayers are buckling under the load of excessive taxation from all levels of government, this provincial action is estimated to cost every taxpaying family another \$425, whether or not they have ever or will ever use daycare services.

The Milton Chamber of Commerce believes that the provincial government should ensure access to good quality daycare services for everyone. But in many cases, perhaps the majority, good quality daycare is already there and accessible through private and non-profit centres. No one argues with the need for quality care for our children. What we deplore is unnecessary spending, unnecessary taxation, unnecessary loss of jobs, unnecessary intervention in private enterprise and un-

necessary upheaval in the lives of very young and sensitive children.

Carol McDonald
President, Milton Chamber of Commerce

Save our hospital

Dear Editor:

On the front page of the January 29 issue of *The Champion* is a glaring wrong staring us in the face.

To me rejoicing at the much awaited opening of the first phase of the new leisure centre, is very hard to do while on the same page I see terrible trouble our hospital is facing. Parking meters installed to help pay a bad deficit is a band-aid measure that could eventually lead to the closing of this much need facility if we continue to think a leisure centre is more important than our hospital.

Our government for quite a few years has been hard on doctors and medical institutions. It has come to the point if we do not do more in support of our local hospitals, we will lose them. Which do we need most — a hospital or a leisure centre — I say we need our hospital.

If we think otherwise we mock Dr. Stevenson and others who worked so hard 50 years ago to give us Milton Private Hospital. Later we all worked hard to have our larger hospital and then later additions.

Because the government lets medical services down, it's time to put up a fight to keep what we have and continue so that it is one of the best facilities in the area.

In times of emergency minutes count. If we lose our hospital it means drives by ambulance or car to Burlington, Hamilton, Oakville or Guelph.

If we want good medical care we will have to roll up our sleeves and show them we are on the team to keep our hospital in operation.

Leisure centers are fine but medical care comes first.

A fine town hall, post office, parks, schools, leisure centre are all fine and show how Miltonians feel about Milton. We are proud of our Town.

But neglect of one of our most important and needed facilities is plain stupid and not very far sighted.

Let's all put our shoulders to the wheel and perhaps we won't need parking meters and even more important the situation won't become worse even in times of recession we all need our hospital.

Marion Lawrence
R R 1 Milton

Private daycare user 'outraged'

This letter was written to The Honourable Marion Boyd, Minister of Community and Social Services. A copy was filed for publication in *The Champion*.

Dear Ms. Boyd:

As a parent of a child attending a private-operated daycare in Milton, I want to voice my concern, or I should say outrage, over the NDP policies

Objectivity hides behind 'sexist blinders'

Dear Editor:

Readers of *The Canadian Champion* can only assume your reporter/columnist Rob Kelly dismantled his own (antifeminist?) highhorse long enough to himself question councillor Rick Day about the same matter than concerned me. (Councillor Day suggested a proposed new donut shop would provide employment opportunities for women.)

In Mr. Kelly's January 31 "Viewpoint" column, he makes reference to last week's meeting of Milton town council in which Mr. Day elicited "a nervous ripple of laughter... and some fretful looks" from fellow councillors through his sexist-sounding comments.

In his column, Mr. Kelly said the councillor defused the issue to his satisfaction by "dancing out of it like M.C. Hammer". Apparently Mr. Kelly was more perturbed by my questioning of Mr. Day and other councillors on the matter than by the comments themselves.

The councillor was not alone in his inappropriate behaviour. Before the night was through, he and meeting chairman Councillor Gerry Brooks were indulging in gay jokes.

As a reporter, I consider my job to report to *The Spectator's* readers news of relevance to them. In case Mr. Kelly doesn't realize it, elected, paid officials behaving in the above mentioned ways can indeed be of interest to readers.

Inappropriate and sexist behaviour on the part of an elected official made national headlines last September with the debacle involving Burlington MP Bill

Kempling and Hamilton East MP Sheila Copps. I don't recall any journalist who rightly reported that incident having his or her "objectivity" publicly called into question.

Objectivity is an abstract that's sparked many a debate in journalistic circles. A concept that's not as difficult to grasp as balanced and fair reporting of facts. After last week's council meeting, I questioned councillors on their views of Mr. Day's behaviour. After discussing my findings with my editor, we decided that too few councillors had taken exception to Mr. Day's behaviour to build a news story on.

The "five-minute lecture and tirade" Mr. Kelly reports me treating him to was, in my recollection, briefer, and in response to the opinion expressed by Mr. Kelly that I was unable to be objective about the matter.

I explained to him that I believed he (and other councillors who didn't see anything wrong in Mr. Day's behaviour) was the one failing to be objective. His inability to remove his sexist blinders, I explained, prevented him from appreciating the gravity of the situation and the potential news story afoot.

Steering clear of questioning the status quo does not amount to objectivity. Just think, if the status quo was never questioned, women in Canada may never have been granted the vote and most of Eastern Europe would still be behind the Iron Curtain.

Sharon Boese
Reporter
The Burlington Spectator

regarding the allocation of funding to daycare centres in Ontario.

It's unfortunate this government realizes it has only one term in power, and therefore must rush all of its ideological policies into place, without regard to how they affect the people they were elected to serve.

I don't understand how this government can be so unfair, to the private sector daycare owners and staff; to the parents of children attending those centres; and to all the taxpayers in Ontario, who are paying an extra 30 million, who will spend an additional 67 million, over the next five years, and who will not receive even one extra daycare space, or one extra dollar for subsidized daycare space, in return.

The private daycare operators were, in many cases, the ones who first responded to the need for daycare centres in a community. Now they are being forced out of business by a government who favours public not-for-profit centres for no other reason than political preference. Oh, of course you say that you're not forcing anyone out of business, but please stop to consider this rationally for a moment.

These two groups are providing

essentially the same service, and one, the non-profit group, receives \$5,000 per worker per year more in government funding. Are parents, already on tight budgets, going to make up this difference? No! Not because they don't want to but because they can't afford to. Will daycare workers be willing to work in private centres at 80 per cent of the salary they'd receive in a non-profit centre? No! Again it's not that they wouldn't like to, but they are already among the lowest paid professionals in our society.

So the government's answer is, convert to public. Except that when our daycare operator looked into converting, she was told that "Well, there isn't really a conversion program set up yet, and it won't be for several months, and anyway it will be a kind of a lottery thing where maybe you'll be chosen and maybe you won't... have a nice day!" If she's "lucky" enough to be one of those chosen, she will recoup about 20 per cent of what she has at stake.

And what about fairness to parents? We have chosen what we think is the best possible care for our child. When our centre is forced to close we will be told to look else-

where. In some cases, the type of service we need isn't provided by public centres! For instance, our daycare provides service on a part-time and casual basis, as well as busing and an after-school program to kindergarten and school-age children.

These specialty services are not in themselves enough to sustain a business, and so will be lost when the private daycare is forced to close.

I urge you to reconsider your government's position on additional funding only for not-for-profit daycare.

If you are determined to proceed with the establishment of a public run system, then at least provide an equitable arrangement for the owners of the privately run centres to convert. Private daycare operators have, for the most part, provided a valuable service and given much more to their communities than they have received. They don't deserve to lose their investment and have their businesses taken away.

This issue has reached the crisis stage for private daycare, and so I look forward to receiving your response to my concerns, soon.

Don Dykeman
Kingsleigh Crt., Milton

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