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Bucks for ducks a boon again



Don Beamish proudly accepted a print from Milton Ducks Unlimited Friday night.

There will be some happy ducks out there.

The Milton Chapter of Ducks Unlimited raised \$32,000 through its eighth annual banquet and auction at Halton Hills Place Friday night. About 250 people attended.

A further \$10,000 was raised through private donations from several local businesses, said Jim Sheldon, a member of the group.

The group also honoured former Milton resident Don Beamish with a gift print. Mr. Beamish has recently moved to North Bay, but for years was an active fundraiser in the area who spearheaded the annual dinner.

Ducks Unlimited is a private, non-profit conservation organization dedicated to preserving and increasing North America's waterfowl resources through restoration and creation of waterfowl habitat across Canada.

Ducks Unlimited biologists estimate that in Canada alone, more than 300 species of birds and more than 70 species of mammals rely directly on wetlands in Canada at some point in their life cycles.

If North Americans do not preserve the wetlands, hundreds of species of plants and animals will die, experts say.

Basement apartment bill to be law soon

A recent basement fire in Mississauga is another example of why the provincial Resident's Rights Bill is so urgently needed, says Housing Minister Evelyn Gigantes.

"This is a horrible tragedy," Ms Gigantes said. "This is exactly what the Province is trying to prevent. We know that these apartments will never be safe if they continue to exist in the black market. They're unsafe because they're illegal."

An estimated 100,000 apartments exist across the province that have been deemed illegal because of zoning by-laws.

Bill 120, the Resident's Rights Bill, will make apartments in houses

a "permitted use" under municipal zoning. It will allow homeowners to add an apartment to their house, providing they meet health and safety standards. The bill will also allow tenants to exercise their rights.

"One of the most important aspects of this legislation is the fact that tenants will finally be able to complain about health and safety issues. Right now, the fear of being evicted from an illegal unit keeps tenants quiet about such conditions," said Ms Gigantes.

Bill 120 will help to ensure safety of basement apartments by:

- Setting new safety standards specifically for apartments in houses, under the fire and building codes. These will require mandatory smoke detectors in apartments in houses and regulate fire issues such as exits in apartments.

- Allowing tenants to complain to local authorities about unsafe conditions, without fear of eviction.

- Encouraging landlords to keep their apartments up to fire code standards by making them legally accountable for their apartments.

- Strengthening and improving municipal investigation and enforcement powers by making it easier for municipalities to get search warrants to investigate possible property standard violations.

Ms Gigantes said reports that municipalities have no power to deal with unsafe apartments are incorrect.

Municipal fire safety officials have broad powers available to them under the Fire Marshals Act, she said.

Bill 120 is awaiting third reading in the legislature and should be law this spring.

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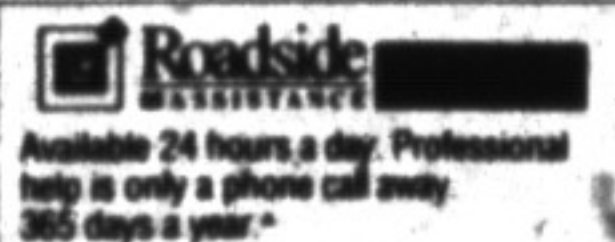
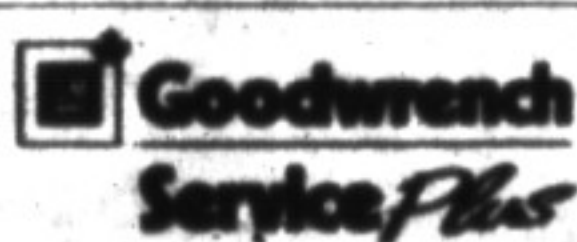


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