



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Who exactly is in charge?

Whether it's in opposition to the widening of Martin St., or to the building of non-profit housing and group homes, some of Milton citizens are slowly beginning to realize that empowerment of the people is nebulous if not non-existent.

Our town council suffers from the same constraints and lack of autonomy.

Councillor Rick Day said last week regarding support for new group homes, "It's not us (town council). It's the province of Ontario." Non-profit housing is under provincial jurisdiction. The road widenings can also be related to the provincial and federal infrastructure funding (blackmail) program, although the road designs appear to be locally concocted.

Milton bylaws seem to apply only to Miltonians as regional, provincial or federal plans supercede any local authority. Councillor Day's comments are a rare admission of the impotence of municipal councils everywhere.

When faced with provincial dictates, why hasn't council been demanding our MPP Noel Duignan stand up in provincial Parliament and support the agreed upon bylaws of local citizens?

Why aren't they bringing regional councillors Brad Clements and Barry Lee, as well as Mayor Gord Krantz, to task when the Halton puzzle palace over-rides local authority?

Personally, I favour a great deal more local autonomy, whether it be in education or municipal services. Who better to decide the character and makeup of a community than the people who live there?

While I have some sympathy for the constraints put on our local council, they are really stewing in a pot of their own making.

View Point

with PATRICK KELLY

As individuals they have done a poor job of directing us to the real decision makers, perhaps out of a false sense of pride and unwillingness to admit council's ineffectiveness when it confronts upper-tier governments.

Actually, we have more reasons to support our local council than be against them. I have witnessed on occasion regional and provincial dog and pony presentations to council. Everyone's so polite, even when the orator and his throng of assistants appear to be two cans short of a six-pack. Get mad. I was. They are strangers offering expensive solutions to problems they largely created.

So whose in charge, is the question? Why do we have so many unelected middlemen, intervenors, consultants? What decisions do councillors really control, and what are we electing them to do?

With our upcoming municipal election, now is the time to ask them, because, plainly and simply, we can't afford to continue to pay for the burgeoning group of duplicative rubber stampers raiding our wallets.

We do have a good and decent council, but in the hierarchy of government they are like nice guys everywhere. Second to last. Just before us.



The family that plays together ...

Nothing spoils a long summer weekend more than 60 in-laws converging on our cottage for a family reunion.

I'm still trying to track down the criminal element in hubby's family who devised this dastardly scheme four years ago, spawning a sinister plot from seemingly idle chitchat.

It's tradition now. My fate is sealed and there is no chance of ever cancelling this painful annual event. My first premise is to protect our property from the relative hordes.

This year the nightmare began Friday afternoon — they're arriving earlier and earlier every year — when the first car pulled into our driveway. The kids — and they're the scariest part of this ordeal — poured out of the vehicles and charged down to the beach like lemmings to the sea, except that they didn't perish but remained to torment and terrify me for the entire weekend.

The youngsters made their own rules as they tore around, jumping heedlessly into inflatable dinghies and ripping out the bottoms, walking off into the bush with the cottage's supply of life jackets, and carelessly brandishing fishing poles, complete with hooks and worms. I stood



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

safely enclosed in my cottage, looking out through the sliding glass doors, hoping that I wouldn't be called upon to prove my legitimacy as a first aid instructor.

The get-together has become so popular with this Irish clan that a cousin and his family drove all the way from New Brunswick this year to meet with relatives he hadn't seen in 20 years.

And another cousin had the gall to phone up earlier in the summer to see if he could bring up his girlfriend's five kids, on top of his two terribles. What could I say? I didn't want to seem inhospitable.

No sooner had the kids spilled out of vehicles than camping gear and dozens of coolers were heaved out of the farthest and darkest corners. In no time at all, the vegetable garden beside the rental cottage disappeared behind eight tents.

The water pump worked overtime as toilets in both cottages were continually flushed and adults had overpowering urges to shower from morning to night, despite the fact that they could have easily enjoyed a refreshing dip in the lake instead of overtaking our septic system.

Fortunately, only one dog showed up this year, but he managed to tree our cats very early on, so Purr-Puss chose to cloister herself within the cottage walls, while Max disappeared during the daylight hours, only to return under cover of night.

Both kids and adults partook of hubby's toys, a lawn tractor and a four-wheeler, much to the annoyance of neighbouring cottagers who, before the end of the weekend, had erected "Go Slow" signs all along our road.

The four-wheeler met a sudden death halfway through the weekend when the chain flew off, cracking the crankcase cover. It was put out to pasture beside the wood pile.

Not only will hubby now be chasing down spare parts for his 1965, 50-horsepower Mercury outboard motor, but he'll have to scout around at wreckers for vital thingamajigs for the four-wheeler.

The thoughtful relatives left behind jewelry, towels, shorts, and bathing suits as well as a truckload of garbage, including \$38-worth of empty beer cans and bottles, hardly enough to cover costs of property repairs and not nearly enough to make up for the wear and tear on yours truly.

Coping with teenagers' drug problems

Parents must realize that many teenagers try drugs.

Good kids, from good families, can become curious or succumb to peer pressure. Then, they may like the high it gives, or use it as an escape from their problems, and do it again and again. None of them think they're hooked, but they also don't want to give it up.

If treatment is going to work, the teenager must buy in.

For him to buy in, we might first find out how the drugs are disrupting his life — is he getting in trouble at school, in trouble with the police, in a car accident while he was high? A drug program might help him, with the police, with money car insurance, school, if he sticks with the program.

Parents must realize that drug treatment is a very stressful time for their teenager. This is not the time to be angry with him — be tolerant, overlook other minor infractions, as long as he is in the drug program. Let's deal with the drugs first.

Parents are encouraged to join support groups, so they can release their anger, express their fears and disappointment, by sharing with other parents who have had similar experiences (and survived). They will realize that others have had their child lie and steal from them, too.

By the time a parent or a court has forced a child into a drug program, that child has probably experimented with several drugs. All kids minimize how much they use drugs, how dependent they are on them, and see no prob-



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

lem with minor drugs, like alcohol and marijuana.

While they may understand (though not agree with) the treatment of a hard drug, like cocaine, they may resist mightily when the program insists that all drugs have to stop.

These kids are totally unprepared for the irritability, the fatigue, the difficulty sleeping, which occur when the drugs stop. If they equated drugs with friends and a good time, they will also be very anxious and upset, thinking that life will be the pits forever.

These kids can't ignore their old friends or all of a sudden have a new group of friends, especially because straight kids will have nothing to do with them.

They have to be encouraged to be honest, to tell their old friends that they have to stay clean because they're undergoing urine testing, and if they test positive there will be severe consequences, like going to jail or losing the use of the car.

Still, these kids will feel lonely, so it's very important to get them involved with other people and other activities, like a part-time job or

joining a support group (such as Alcoholics Anonymous), so they can talk to other people who are going through the same ordeal. Regular counselling also helps, as it not only encourages and supports the teenager, but it also monitors him.

Kids will think that their family should trust them as soon as they join a drug program, but it isn't that simple. It took months, if not years, for that trust to break down, and it will take time to build it up. The child will need to know how he can realistically earn trust and independence, and parents must allow him to earn it (gradually).

Most adolescents slip, have a few relapses, even after they start a drug program, so don't be devastated if it happens. If he slips very often, however, it means he's not ready for the treatment.

For kids who are uncooperative, who frequently slip back into drugs, there is some hope that they will quickly sink so low that they will be motivated to kick the habit. One teen had to wake up in the gutter covered with her own vomit before she decided that she wanted treatment.

No one recommends that parents become detectives, but it is nonetheless true that they should keep their eyes and ears open. Don't ignore the signs. Too many parents think it can't happen to their child, that it only happens to bad kids or kids from dysfunctional families. It does happen to good, loving, decent kids, too, and it's so much easier to treat if it's caught in its early stages.