



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Looking Back



Volunteers had their work cut out for them in February, 1963 when income tax receipts for charitable deductions were mailed to everyone who donated to the community swimming pool fund the year prior. Workers who helped fill out 830 receipts included Audrey Brush, Bernie Stickle, Mary Gervais and Jean Fletcher. Income tax time is coming up again in 1996.

Let's see leadership

Monday night Milton town councillors discussed possible user fee increases for various leisure activities and two things were painfully apparent:

One, there was much discussion about increases and none about cutting back municipal spending to avoid increases.

Two, town councillors, who collectively would be lucky to scare up enough leadership to run a bingo parlour, are loathe to stick their necks out an inch.

Not one of them took much of a stand against raising fees, or looking at alternatives. Ward 2 councillor John Challinor and Wally Hunter danced around the point a bit, according to our reports.

Mr. Challinor sent a mixed message, alternatively praising aspects of the report and damning other parts. Mr. Hunter hinted that he was uneasy about the whole thing because not enough attention has been paid to looking at how efficiently the leisure services department operates.

That's real stirring stuff.

And those two were the only ones who created any ripples.

Now, it is certainly possible that there is no way around raising rental fees for sports fields and halls, and bumping up the costs for various municipal programs.

But before that happens, we want to see a forceful political presence shaped by town councillors, who should be closely scrutinizing the proposed hikes, demanding exploration of alternatives, and staking out what they will and will not accept as a compromise.

This is probably asking too much of Milton council. There is an old saying in politics: "If you want to get along, go along" and it has by and large become the norm in local political circles, as it has in local politics elsewhere.

Our town councillors are nice people and all that. Your next door neighbour is probably a nice person too, but that doesn't mean he or she is capable of running a \$16 million a year corporation, which Milton is, and making the tough decisions necessary in tough times.

Making hard choices makes you unpopular and Milton politicians, like politicians everywhere, hate to be unpopular. They will do almost anything to avoid it. The problem is, the time is rapidly coming — indeed in many ways is already here — when unpopular decisions will have to be made.

On top of that, in the political reorganization scenarios being touted provincially at present, local municipal governments, such as Milton, are to gain influence while upper-tier municipal structures, like Halton Region, are supposedly on the wane.

That means people who have yet to demonstrate much real initiative could end up with a lot more real power.

But there is always a tradeoff. If local politicians get more power, their jobs will be less cushy, more controversial. As well, more people will want those beefed-up jobs. So councillors could face aggressive competition for their seats under a reorganized municipal government.

They can stand up and be counted now and in the coming months, or they can be held accountable and counted out come the next municipal election.

— Rob Kelly

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the February 1, 1995 issue

• St. Paul's United Church presented a Scottish Ceilidh. The event included solo performances and sing-a-longs. Proceeds from the concert went to help purchase new gowns for the choir.

• Ward 2 Councillor John Challinor was pushing for a stricter loitering bylaw. Mr. Challinor felt Milton's 28-year-old no-loitering bylaw needed to be re-examined. This was in response to complaints of teens hanging out at the local Becker's convenience store at Woodward Avenue and Wilson Drive.

• Crawford Lake Conservation Area held its seventh annual Winter on the Escarpment Festival. There were horse-drawn rides on the trails as well as visits to the reconstructed 15th century Iroquoian village.

20 Years Ago

From the February 4, 1976 issue

• The second annual KubKar Rally was held at the Milton Scout Hall. Stock car driver Howie Scannell was on hand to congratulate the winners. There were 75 cubs and their fathers at the event.

• Sol Austen was appointed rector's warden of St. George's Anglican Church in Lowville. She was the first woman in the church's history to assume the post.

• During an annual meeting, Halton holstein breeders honored championship winners from the annual Halton Black and White Day at the Milton Fair, as well as 40-year member John Bird of Stewarttown.

50 Years Ago

From the January 31, 1946 issue

• The 56th meeting of the Halton Union Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company was held. The company maintained steady progress during the year and the financial report presented proved to be satisfactory.

• Council met in a special session with Councillors Rush, Gowland, Crawford, Norris, Higgins and Whewell present and Mayor Geo. Dawson presiding. Council discussed the nuisance of smoking at the arena. Also, the statute of clearing snow from sidewalks was read and the authority of enforcement was found to be the Chief of Police.

• Canadian Club members met for dinner at the Milton Inn and after reassembled at Milton High School to hear the address given by Brigadier C. C. Mann, C.B.E., D.S.O., who was principal staff officer for General Crerar in the European campaign.

Pud

by Steve Nease

