

Opinion

Still waiting anxiously

We had been waiting anxiously for news from the provincial government about how it planned to help salvage Ontario's horse racing industry.

After last week's announcements, we're breathing a little easier, but not resting comfortably.

While horse racing and slot agreements reached with the Woodbine Entertainment Group are a step in the right direction, the long-term future of the industry is still in question.

The horse racing industry was thrown into a panic last March when the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation announced all payments made to industry through the Slots at Racetracks program would come to an end on March 31 of this year.

A few months after cancelling the deal, the government engaged former cabinet ministers Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson to work with the horse racing industry to develop a vision for its future and plan the transition to a more sustainable business model.

An interim report was released last summer, followed by a final report in October. The recommendations detailed a model that the panel believed would provide the "foundation for a sustainable horse racing industry in Ontario."

We don't know yet what other plans for the renewal of the industry are in the works. But Brian Tropea, general manager of the Campbellville-based Ontario Harness Horse Association, said after last week's announcements that he still believes this could be the "beginning of the end."

We hope further details about the transition plan — expected to be revealed in the coming weeks — prove otherwise.

Letters

Town council must control spending, keep taxes low

Dear Editor:

Following your article on the town budget, several people have asked me why Milton property taxes continue to go up considering the \$6 million a year we get from the slots, as well as the increasing revenues from all the new growth we're experiencing.

Well the answer is simple — it seems we have a majority on this council who would rather increase taxes than control spending. While other levels of government are trying to cut spending and keep taxes low, this council not only increases spending and taxes but also introduces new taxes. Last budget it was the hospital levy and now this year we have a new infrastructure (reserve fund) tax introduced by Councillor Rick Di Lorenzo. In my opinion, the only thing this new tax will accomplish is to lighten the wallets of Milton taxpayers by an additional \$100,000 a year.

Also included in this budget is \$55,880 to cover the costs of going from a three-hour parking limit to a five-hour limit, \$56,000 be-

ing spent to change a bylaw that I don't think needed changing.

I believe the only reason we're making this change is to appease a few, and I say again a very few new residents who have a problem obeying our existing bylaw. It's a bylaw that has served our community well for more than 25 years, a bylaw that's in place in more than 95 per cent of municipalities in Ontario.

Looking back over the eight years I have served on council, I believe this is one of the most asinine, ill-conceived ideas I have seen come before council, let alone be approved by council. I rank it right up there with the idea of putting piano stairs in the new arts centre; coincidentally both ideas came from the same councillor.

This budget also includes \$650,000 to purchase three new buses — just what we need more empty buses. It also includes an additional \$76,000 to cover the cost to implement a full Saturday bus service for a four-month period starting in September, a service that

I believe very few people will utilize. This \$76,000 will balloon to more than \$200,000 in 2014. I think it's another example, like the parking bylaw change, of everyone having to pay more in taxes in order to appease a few.

Finally council had an opportunity to set an example and show some leadership by cutting its own budget. I had made a recommendation to reduce our own council budget by \$10,500. But the majority voted against that motion, ironically only minutes before this same council voted to cut the expansion of a summer camp program directed at young kids in order to save \$9,700.

It seems the majority on this council had no problem cutting a program expansion that benefits young Milton children, but drew the line when it came to cutting their own perks and benefits.

And then they wonder why people have such little respect for politicians.

Rick Malboeuf
Ward 4 Councillor



Tree of Life

Shoppers Drug Mart locations in Milton helped raise funds in support of Milton District Hospital Foundation (MDHF) during the Tree of Life campaign. Customers were given the opportunity to purchase and personalize 'Tree of Life' icons including a leaf for \$1, butterfly for \$5, and cardinal for \$50 with 100 per cent of the proceeds — \$10,050 — being donated to the MDHF for the hospital's Maternal Health Unit.

Presenting the cheque to Anne Zujko (left) and Michael Beaver (right) of the MDHF are (from left) Adam Morgan, Subir Bains, John Divirgilio and Renu Choudhary of Milton's Shoppers Drug Mart stores.

Letters welcome

The Canadian Champion welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit, revise and reject letters.

Letters must be signed with first and last name, and the address and the telephone number of the writer included for verification purposes.

Email your letters to kmiceli@miltoncanadianchampion.com or send by mail to 555 Industrial Dr., Milton, Ont., L9T 5E1, or leave them at our office.

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