

Sign of the times: Milton considers amending election sign bylaw

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

There may be changes on the horizon for the Town's election sign bylaw.

While there were mixed reviews around the council table, with some fearing any amendment to the sign rules may be viewed as a slight to democracy, the Town's Committee of the Whole ultimately passed a motion directing staff to look into the issue.

The resolution from Ward 8 Councillor Zee-

shan Hamid asks the Town clerk to report back on the feasibility of amending the election sign bylaw to better manage election signs on public property, including enforcement matters.

"I'm not proposing anything because I don't want politicians making the rules for elections. I'm leaving this in the capable hands of the Town clerk," said Hamid.

He noted with an increasing number of candidates running in local elections, the sheer number of signs can pose a safety hazard.

"This is partly a policy issue and partly an enforcement issue," he said.

Hamid said he conducted an online survey on the topic and, of the 261 respondents, over 90 per cent were in favour of some level of election sign restriction.

"There is a desire to do something about it," he said.

Ward 4 Councillor Rick Malboeuf concurred that local residents do want something done about the "sign pollution" that goes along with elections.

He said while he supports Hamid's motion in principle, he's "not comfortable with us, as incumbents, setting the rules for upcoming elections."

"No matter what recommendation we make or approve, it will be seen by some as changing the rules to make it easier for re-election while making it more difficult for our opponents," he said. "I know that's not the motivation behind the motion, but in politics, perception is everything."

The current bylaw restricts election signage on public property, including community centres, libraries and other Town-owned facilities. On road boulevards, signs are allowed, but are subject to restrictions. For instance, they can't block lines of sight for drivers and pedestrians.

In 2013, Local and Regional Councillor Colin



During the 2015 federal election campaign, many signs were damaged. A Milton councillor has asked the Town clerk to report back on the feasibility of amending the election sign bylaw.

Champion file photo

Best tried to pass a council motion to ban election signs on all local road allowances, but it was defeated. Those opposed countered with claims of freedom of expression, lack of enforcement staff and difficulty for new candidates to get name recognition.

During Monday night's meeting, Best said perhaps there should be restrictions on sign location and size, suggesting small signs in residential neighbourhoods and larger signs in arterial areas.

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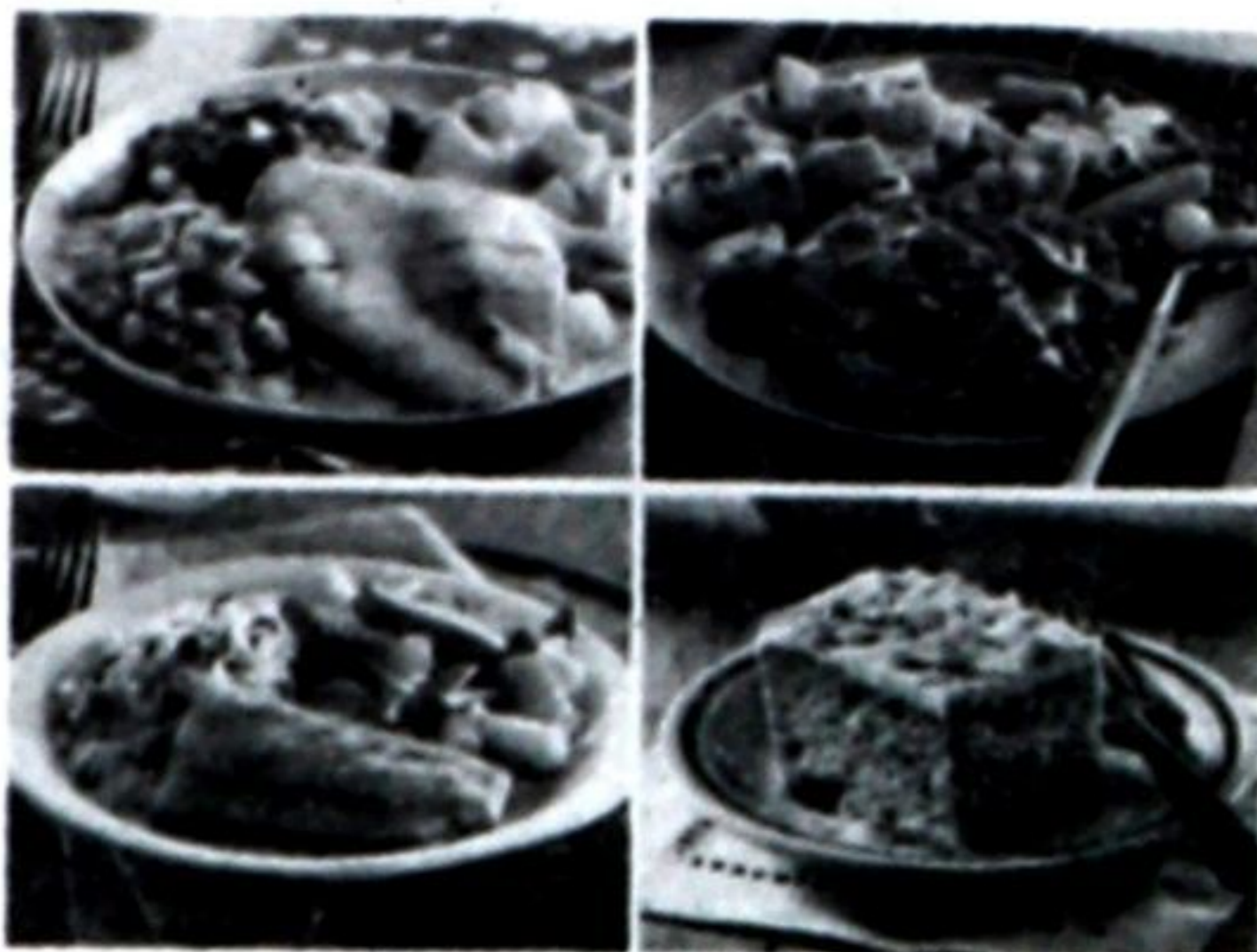
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