

Readers' Corner

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7 | Thursday February 4, 2016 | MILTON CANADIAN CHAMPION | www.insidehalton.com

Letters

Article on uniform tax rate one-sided: councillor

RE: Rural residents united against uniform tax rate, *Champion*, January 28 issue

Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to the latest article on the council decision to move to a uniform tax rate for Milton. Unfortunately, the article only reported the rural side of the issue.

First of all, this is not a tax grab by the town. The truth is this tax change is revenue neutral. As for rural taxpayers not paying for urban services, well let's look at some numbers.

Over the past 10 years, the town has spent \$5 million on the redevelopment of two parks and the Community Centre/Tennis Club within the rural Ward 3. During that same period, we spent a little over \$6 million in park redevelopment in the other seven wards combined.

In the 2016 budget there is \$7 million earmarked for capital projects in the rural area, compare that to the \$1.4 million earmarked for Ward 4, a ward that has nearly twice as many residents and taxpayers as the com-

binated rural areas of wards 1 and 3. So really who is subsidizing who?

The biggest complaint we hear surrounds transit, and that rural tax payers should not be obliged to help pay for it. Well, fewer than 5 per cent of Milton urban households have a member who uses Milton Transit, yet every urban homeowner pays to support public transit whether they want to or not. We do not have a choice. Why? Because the upper levels of government have deemed that the increase in use of public transit is a benefit to everyone. It reduces congestion, gets more cars off the road and reduces greenhouse gas emissions, thereby helping the environment which benefits everyone.

Ward 3 Councillor Cindy Lunau must agree with this because, during her 18 years on council, she has voted in favour of many recommendations to increase service levels for Milton Transit. On one hand, it appears she supports increased use of public transit but on the other hand it looks as though she

doesn't believe she or the people she represents should help pay for it.

As for those who have suggested that maybe the people of Ward 3 should consider seceding from Milton and joining Wellington County, consider the following. Using the higher single tax rate a rural property in Milton assessed at \$800,000 would pay \$6,025 in total taxes — municipal, regional and education. A similar property in Erin would pay \$9,048, while in Puslinch, the rate would be \$8,110, and \$8,910 in Guelph Eramosa. In Halton Hills, where there is a single uniform rate, taxes would be over \$7,000.

By comparison, Milton rural taxpayers aren't doing so badly.

This tax change is not about having rural taxpayers pay for urban services. It is about rural taxpayers contributing more towards the costs of providing the services they are receiving.

Rick Malboeuf,
Ward 4 Councillor

Motion should be shelved

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter in support of Peter Lambrick's letter, published in the January 7 issue of the *Champion*.

The process for changing the tax structure in Milton presently under way is completely undemocratic. To contemplate such a change in the middle of budget deliberations, with no warning to those affected, is unacceptable. There is no tax crisis in Milton to warrant the motion to suspend rules and procedures, which prevented any discussion at council. Surrounding municipalities have separate tax arrangements for urban and rural residents. They recognize this to be as fair to all taxpayers as is possible.

I do not believe the urban councillors took any time to consult with rural residents nor explore the costs we incur. How many of them understand the costs involved in installing and maintaining wells, for example?

The motion that was passed at council should be shelved and well informed discussion with affected taxpayers, at well advertised public meetings, should be initiated before any action is taken. Councillors Rick Malboeuf and Zeeshan Hamid, and those councillors who supported their motion, seem to be practising a kind of divisive politics.

Walt Elliot, Milton

Fire sparks call for increased safety precautions in barns

Re: Milton trainer left reeling after barn fire claims 44 horses, *Champion*, January 7 issue

Dear Editor,

I was sickened and sorry to read of the death of so many precious and dearly loved animals. What a tragedy for so many involved owners as well, who loved them like their own family. This also struck me at once with some anger over the fact that these horses were housed in basically a fire pit without a ceiling: metal walls, kindling as in straw, sawdust, hay and

wooden structures to surround their pens. Light a match or have a spark go off and you have an inferno killing horses.

Will someone explain why these beloved multi-million dollar horses/investments, did not have any type of fire protection, such as an alarm or sprinkler system, instead of relying on a possible sighting of the fire by someone passing by?

I'm not blaming the owners. I'm just in the dark here and feel like this should not happen in an age when fire safety precautions are

available.

Perhaps instead of housing so many together, a smaller stable could work with a sprinkler system and smoke detector linked to a security company. Perhaps, instead of putting 40 horses together, the facility could house 20. There is never a reason to blame in a tragedy; but we can use it to analyze for ways to prevent another. It would be unbearable to hear of another such devastating fire.

Marilyn Brown, Waterdown

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