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## Riding the wave

While folks in Leamington were busy discussing future economic directions and local business development at the “Prosperity in Motion” event last week, several businesses in Essex were riding the rolling waves of closure (see Dan Schwab’s stories on pages 21 and 22). Three business closures in as many weeks is arguably cause for concern, especially when two of those businesses – Quiznos Sub and Godfather

*free press*

### editorial

*laurie brett*

Pizza – were franchises anchored at the north end of town. Concerns over downtown vacancies may soon need to be broadened to include vacancies in

the commercial hinterland.

As the downturn in the local economy begins to make its presence felt, the Town of Essex continues to wait for a strategic plan to be drafted by the Shores of Essex Resource Corporation, a new, independent organization based in the Harrow and Colchester South area. What that plan will contain is anyone’s guess, but the chances of it addressing the ongoing problems along Talbot Street are slim.

Equally slim are the chances that a new economic development initiative announced last week for southwestern Ontario will effectively benefit Essex County. County Council’s endorsement of the initiative – which would see the vast expanse that lies between Kitchener-Waterloo and Windsor promote itself as one economic engine – may seem harmless now. But the group’s work is unlikely to proceed without a request for a financial commitment, and few benefits will accrue to the Town of Essex or its taxpayers in the near future from our cooperation.

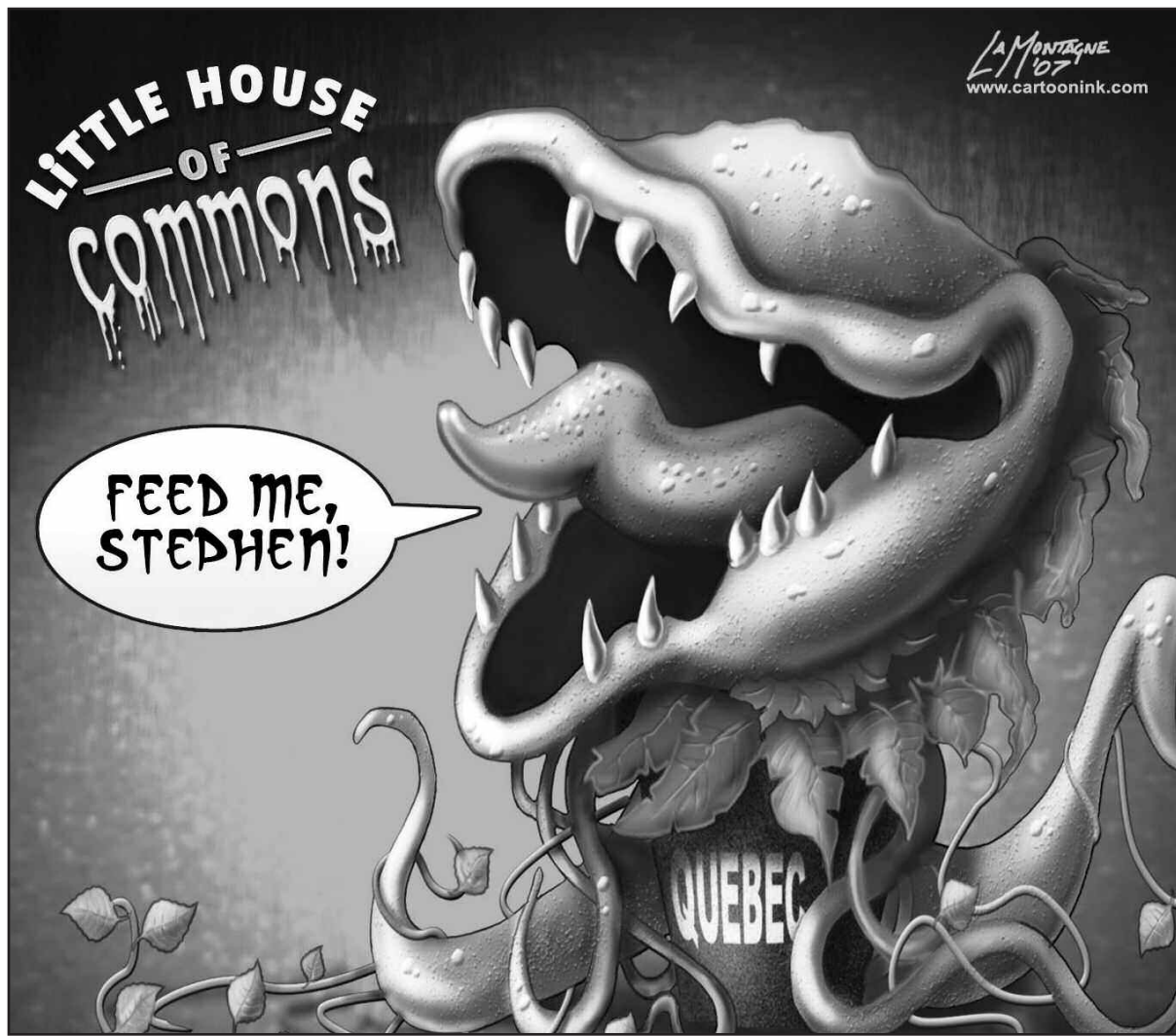
Instead of endorsing plans that others propose to us, we should be actively making plans for our own economic future. Leamington is on the right path.

## “Top 50” – again!

Essex Fun Fest organizers are receiving their share of accolades this week. For the third year in a row, the annual summer event has made the list of the Top 50 festivals and events in Ontario. And, for the second year in a row, a member of the Fun Fest committee has been recognized for outstanding dedication.

Free Press columnist Bill Gay was named Volunteer of the Year at the 20th annual Festivals and Events Ontario convention held last weekend. Gay was recognized for 15 consecutive years of service with the Fun Fest committee.

Although he was quick to praise the team effort required to pull off such a successful event, the spotlight should fall brightly on Bill this time around.



Canada and the United States are preparing to honour the 200 years of peace between their respective nations when the bicentennial of the War of 1812 comes around in 2012.

It will be three years of cannons and redcoats, First Nation warriors and militia. Colorful pageantry will include marches and martial music as well as battle re-enactments to commemorate those who fell to keep Canada a separate country.

For Canada, the bicentennial of the War of 1812 ignites a pride and patriotism as we mark the events that really paved the way for the birth of the nation now called Canada. For the Americans, the war solidified their position as a new, independent state sharing the North American continent with British North America.

Bills are now pending in both Congress and Parliament to provide funding to assist local groups with celebrations. Already, meetings have taken place among the groups of 1812 forts like Forts George and



### opinion

*bill gay*

Erie on the Niagara Frontier with their counterpart across the river, Fort Niagara.

Look for similar alliances between old “enemies” like Fort Malden at Amherstburg and Fort Meigs in Perrysburg, Ohio. The observances are already beginning.

Thursday, March 15 at the Fort Meigs Visitor Centre, historian Frank Melhorn will tell the story of Metoss. He will recount an investigation into the historical truth of humane treatment of an American prisoner of war by Metoss, an Indian chief whose son died from American artillery fire from Fort Meigs. The program is free

and open to the public.

Ron Dale, superintendent of the Niagara Historic Parks of Canada, says he expects to see stamps and coins created to mark the bicentennial event. One of the goals is to increase attendance at War of 1812 historic sites and to build awareness in both Canada and the U.S. of our shared illustrious history. It is hoped that Ontario’s schools will expand their rather scanty coverage of the conflict, as currently the War of 1812 only appears briefly in Grades 7 and 10 history courses.

Other related events will include a traveling exhibit by the Canadian War Museum, and the possibility that the successor to the 41st Regiment of Foot might return the Honours of War (for instance the captured flags from the capture of Detroit) to Canada.

Essex County is ideally positioned to take advantage of the 2012 events and bicentennial funding. The ultimate goal is to leave a lasting legacy of a war that led to two centuries of peace.



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