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negotiate a deal in which only token numbers of refugees returned if he were willing to yield on those other points, but it is as important symbolically in Israeli politics that NONE of

come about without cooperation or even full-scale revolutions.

So now would be a good time to win the regimes some credit by doing a peace deal with Israel that creates a

> Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

# Mayor's attitude could torpedo deal

**SIR:** Chatham-Kent has received a harsh and timely wake-up call from Dr. Strasser, indicating just how delicate relations can be between elected officials and potential investors. The president of St. Clair College has been working tirelessly for years with the municipality to improve the Thames Campus with an arena, community wellness and aquatic centre, gymnasium, and other recreational amenities, not to mention plans for expansions to the educational capacity of the college itself. In return, he's met resistance, disbelief and opposition from our new mayor. If the lobbyists have their way, it wouldn't be the first time investors have packed their suitcases of cash and left over careless political comments.

As a former mayoral and council candidate, I can attest to the extreme lobbying pressure exerted to oppose the rec centre. However, at the end of the day, when the dust was blown off the calculator display, I could find no valid reason to oppose such a positive community building initiative.

There continues to be those in this community with no sense of vision or creativity. When all of the misinformation and lies about the proposed rec centre are discounted, it's hard to find anything negative about it. However, it is an embarrassment to all of us that our mayor is under the influence of this lobbying and misinformation from cynical forces, refusing to understand the consequences of his stance.

## LETTER

We witnessed many councillors showing the leadership they were elected to provide, speaking eloquently in favour of the rec centre in full possession of the facts, or asking questions when unsure.

That Mayor Hope continues to be influenced by narrow special interests instead of the best interests of Chatham-Kent does not bode well for our future. We cannot afford four more years of weak and directionless leadership easily subject to undue lobbying influence.

More ominously, with *The Chatham Daily News* editorial of April 5, "From opponent to proponent," serving as yet another example, local media continues to shelter Hope from criticism in a manner that's both biased and unjournalistic.

Sometimes it takes an outsider to recognize that the emperor has no clothes. Dr. Strasser understands what's been happening in Chatham-Kent, and wasn't afraid to point out what the media has refused to report.

If the rec centre fails to proceed because of Hope's illogical opposition, it sends a contradictory message to potential Chatham-Kent investors over the positive growth-oriented image we've been desperately trying to promote with our tax dollars. Mayor Hope threatens to undo years of economic

development efforts as a result. It is worth noting the many times Chatham-Kent has come in second when a company has been deciding the location of a new plant, and one reason often cited is the lack of recreational facilities such as those proposed by St. Clair College. Ironically, a lack of post-secondary educational facilities has been suggested as well, and this proposal addresses both concerns with no impact to property taxes.

The rec centre will inject millions of dollars into our economy and bring at least 500 new students annually, which are both key components of our Community Strategic Plan which were recently affirmed by council and even the mayor as a vital part of our future strategic direction.

Mayor Hope's obstinate personal opposition to this particular project, and "no" votes in view of council's majority full-hearted support, merely demonstrates that Hope doesn't understand his role as mayor and isn't up to the job. Hope claims to have done his homework when defending his negative opinion, but who exactly was his study partner?

Based on any analysis, it's hard to see how any part of Chatham-Kent will come out as a winner should mayor Hope prevail and chase away this investment.

**AUSTIN WRIGHT**  
Chatham