Welcome back, folks

The View From Here

With Jamie Harrison

I've now been back in Georgetown for about a year and a half, thankfully escaping from the stifling confines of Windsor, Canada's southernmost blight, *er*, city. While I shed no tears as I left the Detroit suburb (let's not kid ourselves), I wasn't too thrilled to be moving home – nothing against my parents or the town – but I was disappointed with the way things worked out.

Once I was able to deal with the fact that, for the time being, I would be living with mom and dad, yet again, I was surprised to see how many of my peers had returned to town.

For all the time that, as kids, we spent planning our escape from Georgetown, many of us came back and were glad to do so. Turns out the grass wasn't as green as we thought it might be elsewhere.

I have had the opportunity to live and work in large cities, in small cities, in large towns and in small towns. While Georgetown couldn't exactly qualify as a "small town," anymore, it still has the charm which lures people out from the city, wanting to make their escape from the proposed Mega-city madness.

Unlike many folks, I was never Toronto-phobic. I chose to go to school in Toronto, as did my younger brother. I chose to live there while going to school, as did my brother. The city, any city, can be an exciting place when you are young and always on the go.

However, I can also see the other side of the coin. Once one passes that certain point in life where going out every other night to the latest clubs is *the* most important thing – when raising kids takes priority – the city may not always be first choice on many lists. That is what prompted my parents to move to Georgetown in 1968.

Back then, most of the homes east of Maple Avenue were brand new, built by Rex Heslop. My aunts and uncles told my parents that they were moving out to boondocks, leaving the familiar confines of west Toronto.

Now I think they are jealous.

Calling it like it is ...

Speaking of towns, I had occasion to travel to Oakville last week, to attend a news conference.

Upon entering the borders of our neighbour to the south, I couldn't help but notice that Oakville's population seems stuck at 99,000. This, despite the fact that Oakville has experienced a housing boom. Evidently the houses must stay vacant, as that population sign hasn't budged even so far as 99,001 in all the years that I have been going to Oakville.

Why? Is there some great vortex which immediately swallows up new arrivals? Does Oakville have a mortality-emigration rate directly proportional to the town's immigration rate? Or is there some more sinister, fiendish reason that the sign proclaiming Oakville's is stuck at 99,000?

A cynic might suggest that the reason Oakville has not, and will not ever acknowledge a population of more that 99,000 is simply because the much vaunted 'Town of Oakville' must be considered a city once it breaks the 100,000 population barrier.

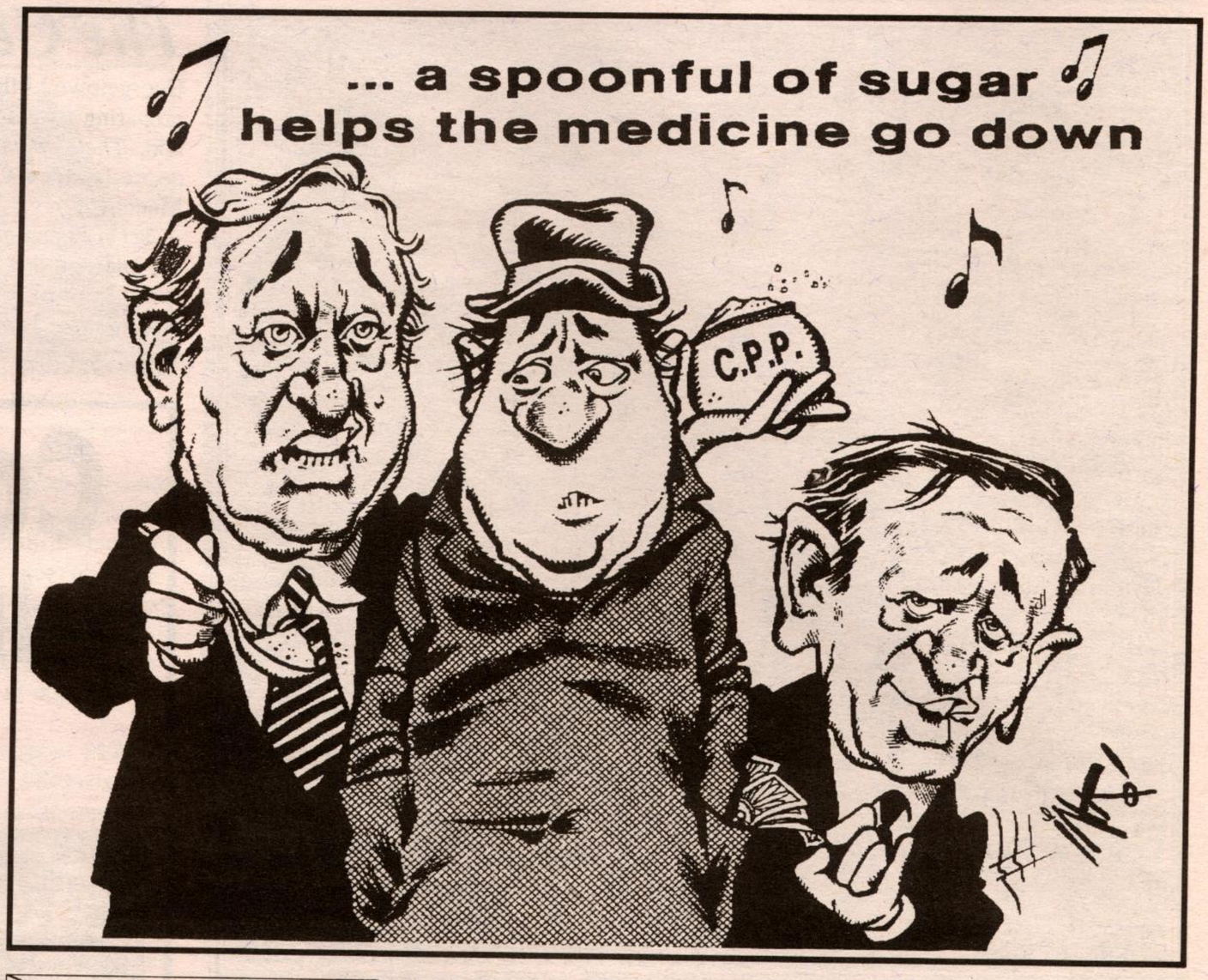
By the way, I am a cynic.

If you ever have the occasion to phone the Town of Oakville, you will notice that they are very particular about emphasizing the word 'Town,' lest you forget that the populace officially sits below the 100,000 mark. Call it a city and you will be immediately corrected on your grievous error. You may have to perform community service, too.

Let's not be afraid to call it what it is; to the good people of Oakville, your little 'burb is a city. Really. Like Burlington; Hamilton, Mississauga and Brampton.

Living in denial won't change that.

Jamie Harrison is a reporter with The Georgetown Gemini.



Your **LETTERS**

Citizenship Act celebrates 50 years

To the Editor,

During 1997, Canadians from coast to coast will be commemorating a special milestone in the history of this country. Jan. 1 was the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Citizenship Act.

Prior to the passage of this important legislation, there was legally no such thing as a "Canadian." Men and women from this country were considered British subjects residing in Canada. When traveling abroad, they used British passports. The passage of the first Citizenship Act changed that.

In February 1945, Canadian Cabinet Minister Paul Martin, Sr., visited a military cemetery in Dieppe, France. As he walked among the wooden crosses, he was moved by the terrible sacrifice that Canadian soldiers had made in the fight for peace. He was also struck by the varied origins of names on the graves. These soldiers had come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. They had come from different parts of the country. The one thing that they all had that united them all was that they were Canadian.

They had also fought and died to defend the country they loved. Martin felt he must do something to honour their memory and their sacrifice. It was here in the cold winter of France that the idea of Canadian citizenship was born.

Martin, supported by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, drafted a Canadian Citizenship Act and presented it to the House of Commons in 1946. After much debate, it passed with overwhelming support. The Act received Royal Assent in July 1946 an came into effect on July 1, 1947.

Shortly afterwards, at a citizenship ceremony in Ottawa, Prime Minister MacKenzie King had the honour of being the first person ever to say, "I speak to you as a citizen of Canada," after he received the first citizenship certificate.

Over the past five decades, this country has grown and developed into a leader among nations. Canada is respected and envied as a prosperous and compassionate nation. A Canadian passport is welcomed with a smile in countries around the world.

This 50th anniversary is an opportunity to think about how precious our citizenship is. It is also a chance to reflect with pride on how much we have accomplished as a country.

Julian Reed, MP
Halton-Peel

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