

Mayor's mid-term look at town

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With council in the middle of a two-year term, Mayor Les Doby missed his annual opportunity to report to the people of town at a nomination meeting, or to restate council's hopes and plans at an inaugural session. The mayor instead happily answered questions put to him by the Free Press on regional government, immediate town plans, Acton centennial annexation, and specific problems.

Join the timely conversation.

Q: Do you suppose this will be the last year for a local council to operate and do you see Acton as one unit with Nassagaweya?

A: If things weren't being so well planned for us there are one or two possibilities for Acton. It's my considered opinion that the Minister, when he stated January 1971, meant what he said and he's not going to make his program any easier by deferring it. I think the information that he will require to make a decision will have been in by that time and a decision will be made by January 1971.

Q: Do you feel that there's a real need for regional government, a need for planning around regional government?

A: There's no question about this. Planning is such a part of our life today that planning on a regional basis is the only answer. We have had to concede this point as of some two or three years ago because the local scene is controlled by the extent to which they can tax the local resident for certain services, education being the major factor. The desire for regional government though is very broad because of the common sense approach to the broad base of assessment being required to alleviate the high cost of today's means of living, development and transportation.

Q: Do you feel that Acton will have to annex any parts of Esqueping this year?

A: No, certainly not in 1970. If regional government does not take place in '71 as proposed there is a possibility beyond the year 1970 we may have to make application for annexation of small areas if it makes sensible planning and on the basis of proposed regional development. What happens in Acton and Esqueping should be related.

I think that the Minister would support statements he has made in the past that he would consider small requests for annexation to conform to town planning. In no way will they consider mass annexation until regional government in any given area is defined.

Q: What in your opinion will be the biggest change in Acton in 1970?

A: It's become rather obvious that the major thing that will take place here is residential development. Unless there are certain restrictions placed on development we should move ahead very rapidly with residential growth. We will have new shopping areas. We will have a new pollution control plant in operation providing a better service to the municipality and industry. We will move ahead with our search for additional water supply to support our new development.

We may have certain controls on the extent to which we can grow but we are going to grow more rapidly than we have in the past.

We should also see some improvements to Mill St. West, whether we do the whole project as proposed or probably one part of the two-phased program. It's been



"Certainly be subdivision developments"

deferred for many years and most certainly we must get something done there this year.

Q: Do you feel it would be wise for the mayor to sit on planning board and be able to introduce their recommendations to council?

A: Yes, I think this is a good recommendation. I have always considered myself an ex officio member of any board or commission. Because of the heavy load of all other committees and boards which I must sit on beside council, I was reluctant to be the representative on planning board because many times I would be prevented from attending the meetings due to other commitments. Therefore we appoint members of council to sit on the board and by being ex officio I could attend at any time and comment accordingly.

Q: In your opinion do you think some housing subdivisions will get started this year?

A: It's quite possible that a major subdivision development will not take place but there will certainly be developments such as the south of Churchill Road. In my opinion it should move ahead very quickly in the spring because preliminary inquiries and applications have been made at the present time and with the advent of good weather this should move ahead very quickly. I don't feel that the problems holding up the development of the Seynuck and Vyse farms are so critical that they can't be ironed out by spring and that perhaps these will move ahead also.

Q: We hear a lot of comment here about Senior Citizens housing and geared-to-income housing on Cobble Hill. When do you expect this to get going?

A: With the exception of course of certain objections which may still come through, we have taken our stand as a council on the matter and my personal view is that the proper hearings will be held, the criticisms and objections will be heard and without question it must go ahead.

Q: Is there any hope for new industry in the industrial park this year? What is being done about the industrial park?

A: First of all I guess I should remind you of the stand taken by council at the closing of 1969. The council was determined to move ahead with whatever is required to develop the land to make it acceptable to industrial development. In the length of time we have held this land as potential industrial land not too much of a definite nature has been done in that area because of the financing.

All of our good intentions mean very little if we can't get the approvals required to have monies and plans for development of the area. In our five year projection we have asked for and have approved the amount we felt would be required in any given year to make progressive development in the industrial park. We have been very concerned about the local small industries who have been wanting to expand but it isn't just a simple matter of saying "Fine, come on, move in, we'll give you two acres." We must make certain that it's acceptable to the Ontario Municipal board who will be providing the monies to develop the area.

I know the council having made the stand last year will move ahead very quickly in 1970, in fact it's on the agenda for the first administration meeting.

I have no way of guaranteeing that we will get new industry. I am not overly concerned, I could be quite happy with residential development in its stead if we can't get the industry.

There's no way we can compel people to come here, I think that we have an ideal situation for industry to be interested but these people themselves must determine if they want to come to Acton. We have made it as attractive as possible for them.

We have promoted to the extent it is possible at the human level with what time we have available as part-time politicians and board and committee members. Some towns have staff to work at this continuously and naturally they get progressive results.

The town of Acton is in no position to hire a full-time industrial development manager. Acton has made a very good move in making the land available. We are ready when someone else is interested.



"Never tried to dictate to parks board"



"No way to guarantee new industry"

Q: What was the major factor that held up work in Acton - sidewalks, for instance - this year?

A: The proper applications were made for the grants and subsidies required to move ahead with these projects. We never move ahead into major capital works expecting the local ratepayer to provide the monies for the town to spend out of current taxation. So we take whatever time is required by the policies of the various departments of the government to make application for subsidy. In some cases there are supplementary grants, unconditional grants and so on. During the course of 1969 whether it is because of the advent of regional government or not it has taken longer than normal to have certain things approved.

For instance last year we expected to receive in grants in the area of \$100,000 which we should have been informed of by mid-May. We finally learned in late July that our allocation was about half this amount. Therefore we see that many of our proposed works which we spent many hours on had to be cancelled out because of the reduction caused by the provincial budget and in turn we have paid the price. However, works that weren't completed in 1969 should now move ahead readily with the advent of good weather in 1970.

Q: Have any plans been made for the town's centennial?

A: Here we go again! If regional government comes inside of the two years prior to our centennial which will be in 1973 I can only say that I would hope that we retain enough of our identity to be ourselves as a community. There's no reason why we can't proceed with plans for our centennial year.

It has been mentioned by myself and others in the past two years that a special committee should be formed to do some planning for this special event in the history of our town. I would highly recommend now that perhaps the council, the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations get thinking about this and put it on their early 1970 agendas and plan something very concrete that can be held as a special function in 1973.

Q: Council has had some problems with parks board this year - at least, some members of the board - and they seemed to think that council was assuming some control of parks and recreation, where really it belonged to them. Have you any comment?

A: My only comment would be this: it's my personal opinion there's just nothing wrong at all in the association between council and the parks board. I think that the basis of most of our problems is comments being misconstrued; certain approaches in communication may be breaking down here and there.

But we do have our liaison with the board and commission through our council members who are appointed to these boards. As members of these boards and commissions they are council's representatives on the boards, and in like fashion they are the board's liaison with council.

However, as members of council their position is to convey to the board and the commission council's position on all matters. I don't recall of any single incident in the past year where council has in any way tried to dictate to the parks board or the recreation commission. Council is simply fulfilling their role as the provider and when recommendations are made and certain things are requested then council must consider these properly and this in my opinion is all council has ever done.

Q: Have any plans been made to do something about the arena?

A: Most certainly. I justify again council's position with the parks board and recreation commission that they must ask questions when recommendations are made. A great number of our councillors have been on council for many years and recall other requirements in this area. They're quite familiar with the needs of the building.

One comment made already is that on our insurance reviews we found that the steel structure was absolutely sound. Now

this hasn't changed in the past three or four years!

Any recommendation being made by the board with requirement for underpinnings or wall structure will be considered only on the basis of what we can provide by budget. The people of our town are concerned about mill rates and on their behalf council is likewise concerned about mill rates; the only way you can show your concern is to consider the merits of what you're going to spend. Whatever is required I'm sure council finds some ways and means to provide.

Q: Do you feel there's a lack of communication or liaison with the Halton County Board of Education?

A: No, I feel communication is good from the board to the municipality.

I support this by saying that we've had various pieces of correspondence from them and to comply with their requests with regard to communication it would almost be necessary to add staff to our office to communicate properly with them. So I feel that as far as I'm personally concerned the board has shown a desire to communicate above and beyond what the municipality could cope with!

I think that any information we require we will get and as far as replies are concerned we get comments of council, probably personal comment by myself or individual members of council, if and when required by the board.

Q: Do you feel that local councils have not enough influence over the decisions made by the Halton County Board of Education?

A: Outside of bigger centres I'd suggest that it isn't a feasible thing. Since the school board is set up on a county basis which in some sense is a regional system it's not going to be satisfactory until such time as we have regional government to correspond to our regional school boards. This way on a regional basis there should be a degree of influence over the school board's decisions.

But when you consider the numerous small municipalities who'd like to have a voice it's not feasible in my opinion that we should have any concrete opinions as to the decisions of the board.

Of course, naturally, there has been some comment about the establishment of salaries and so on but this of course comes within their jurisdiction and not ours. These can be questioned from time to time but unless you can do something constructive about it there's no point in even discussing the matter.

Q: In your opinion what is it that held the town's expansion back in the last few years?

A: It isn't because of the last few years but our geographical location that's had some bearing on the matter, not because of our location in the county but because of the terrain. Our town is built on a series of three hills involving rock and sand and those things costly for construction of either homes or industrial development.

We have one or two directions we can go with reasonably economic means of development thinking of installation of services and so on. I'm sure that all the development that will be required in the next few years can easily be handled in the areas available in town at the present time without annexation. If required after this year perhaps some annexation of a small nature could be moved into.

There's also the problem now of the regional government process which is slowing down every municipality.

The development of homes of course is a necessity today and in most areas adjacent to Acton they have been rapidly built up. We have the area available, with our new pollution control plant we'll have the means to support residential development as well as some industrial development. I can see no reason for Acton not to grow now but these are the things which have held us back in the past.

Certain problems have arisen because we are a small town... development requiring heavily increased staffs, increased budgets and so on. These things are relative and are the only things which have really held Acton back.



"Minister meant what he said"



"Town's centennial? - Here we go again!"

Q: What do you think was the biggest change in the past ten years?

A: Well, most certainly the biggest change we have seen within the confines of the town has been the increased residential development, the completion of Lakeview subdivision, additional homes and commercial areas being developed, improvements to our main thoroughfare. Certain areas have been paved that weren't paved before.

We've moved ahead with new water service, a supply of water which should be adequate for some time with regional development. This of course does not relieve us from the problem of seeking additional supply which we are moving into this year.

I think also of the building of a new library, the hydro office, modifications to our town office providing a better service to our people. We most certainly have enjoyed almost 10 years now of dial telephone exchange and various other things which have been natural improvements as the years have advanced.

Nothing sensational has happened in Acton because Acton isn't large enough to accommodate those things which have been happening elsewhere. I think some of the more important points in the past ten years have been those things which have created problems for the town of Acton because of its size.

We can't have our cake and eat it! If we want to stay small there must be a price such as not having a very large voice in the county let alone the province.

If we want to grow then we seek that stronger voice that some of us wish to have but we forfeit the other things that people moved to Acton for. Those people continue to move to Acton for the small town life but it would no longer be a small town and what they moved here for would be gone.

Q: Do you think the plan for the long-delayed swimming pool will be feasible soon?

A: I can recall the campaign that was held here some years ago to have a swimming pool developed in Prospect Park, and I tramped the town with many others to try and solicit the funds required to do this. Unfortunately all that was realized from this was the children's pool. We must be reasonable in these areas. For 5,000 people we can't have all the amenities we see in other towns of 10, 15 or 20,000. I think this is the basis of most of our problem.

I like everyone else would like to have the nicer things of life - a swimming pool would be very nice. But can we actually support this with 5,000 people? Once again we'll have to settle for what is reasonable for a town the size of Acton.

Q: At a recent council meeting the subject of No. 7 highway came up. Have you any thoughts on the condition of this road and the many recent fatalities along one particular stretch?

A: No. 7 highway has been a source of concern for council and myself personally for a number of years. Since the 401 came into operation No. 7 highway is no more than a service road, and a very poor one at that. The contours and the hills between Guelph and Georgetown have made it a very hazardous road for many years. It has never been in my opinion a good highway.

I recall our need to improve Young and Queen Sts. a few years ago following about three or four years of continuous cancellations of proposed works on No. 7 and now at this late date at least two and a half years have gone by since we met with Esqueping township council to approve the proposed plans of development on No. 7.

Quite naturally the effect of the federal budget on the provincial budget has in turn had its effect of stalling the reconstruction on No. 7. It's of growing concern to the town of Acton not only from the standpoint of the fatalities that we've had recently but because of its importance to the town in the areas of growth and development.

The very fact that No. 25 services us to highway 401 is not the total answer. From 401 to Acton must have more and better means of approach. I think that while we will have development because of highway 25 and its proximity to 401 there has been much talk about a proposed expressway from the Belfield area in Toronto to bypass Acton in some area north of the town. The sooner we realize when and where this will be located the more advantageous to us in our planning.

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