

Free Press Editorial Page

Government recognition . . .

Perhaps there are some who were disappointed in the Robarts' government's proposals for this area as outlined in the design for development released in Toronto last week.

There were no startling promises of dynamic growth, or sudden rise to city status, for the towns and villages of the commutershed, as it has been labelled, but prospects now look bright for sound, orderly development of urban areas at small expense to agricultural land.

Recognition by the government of the importance of agricultural land, the need for suitable recreation areas and a desire to tailor the suit to fit the needs of the people who live here was a dominant feature of the plan.

Growth in the commutershed will be restricted to the smaller towns and villages with Acton, Georgetown and Milton being named as centres where restrained development will be encouraged. Restrictions on population preclude more than 25,000 people.

In the North Halton area we see the planners envisioning three compact towns of almost equal size serving the rural population.

Georgetown, which has had a meteoric rise in population in the last decade, will perhaps feel the pinch first with some restrictions on development.

The direction, we feel, should stimulate growth in Acton and Milton. Both communities have felt the frustration of strangled development in the last few months and the futility of speeding up projects delayed at Queen's Park.

Now, the government has given a green light to further development but at the same time cautioned against huge growth proposals which would overload facilities and services. It seems to be the right time for Acton to annex land for development proposals which have been delayed by the government's intentional freeze.

The size and shape of the commutershed borrowed from the Plunkett Report, which envisioned an agricultural belt suspended above a city spread along the lakeshore. But there the similarity ends. Design for Development proceeds with a mixed bag—urban and rural—unlike the Plunkett report which recommended a complete rural environment, governed to suit agricultural needs.

Although the government's concept was designed to hold the size and relieve the pressures on Metro Toronto, expansionists in the city are already interpreting the plan as merely a change of direction for their megalomania.

Instead of expansion to the east or west, they see metro growing along the corridor to the north that extends to Barrie. Indeed, it looks as if there will still be friction between the province and the city which will not be resolved until there are comparable strengths in other places.

Smaller places reacted favorably.

Mayor Les Duby, asked for his opinion of the concept, was typical of the reaction from the smaller towns and townships.

"Just what the doctor ordered," he declared.

Appetizing apple . . .

It is extremely difficult to criticize the regional development concept without acknowledging the vast amount of study which went into the plan for the Toronto-centred region.

Perhaps the only major criticism we would make, without further study, is the amount of control that passes from local bodies into the hands of the government of the province. Queen's Park prefers to call it greater provincial leadership.

On that point, the government has said publicly that they want greater control to pass into the hands of local councils especially after regional government is instituted. For instance, in the matter of the proposed Spadina Expressway, a sore point in Toronto at this time, the province feels it is an issue which should be decided by city politicians.

Queen's Park wants no part of the thorny issue, especially when we approach the eve of an election.

Now there are those who would interpret this as meaning the government would just as soon let local political figures bear the brunt of criticism, which will come no matter which way the decision swings. (And there has been ample evidence in the past to vindicate the feeling the politicians will dodge any

decisions which could cost them votes.)

But there is another way of looking at the philosophy behind the swing to more autonomy for local councils. There is no doubt the province has been overburdened with work. Decisions that could quite easily have been made at the local level have been left waiting at Queen's Park. Needed were some guidelines. The regional development concept unveiled last week supplies the guidelines. All that is needed now are municipal representatives who can interpret them correctly.

If the province had opted for a more powerful central organization at Queen's Park with its mounting costs and added lists of civil servants, there would have been increased criticism of the administration. Spread the decision-making around, keep your finger on the lid, and the administration makes a much more appetizing apple for the public.

Some of the best planners and thinkers in the province were employed to come up with the most recent development concept. We think it is a good one. However, like all concepts, it is much better to wait and see how the theories work when applied than to pass blanket approval on them.



SPRING CREPT quietly into the district on the wings of a soft, warm breeze that opened up buds, encouraged flowers and turned the bareness of the early season into a veritable kaleidoscope of greens. Rivers, like the Eramosa which flows gently down the river valley at this point, attracted anglers and a sprinkling of pedestrians who walked its banks and took in the transformation with a wonder that doesn't decline with years although Nature repeats her performance annually. —(Staff Photo)



Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

If someone suddenly asks you to make a television appearance, take my advice. Don't. Not unless you can talk with lucidity, intelligence and wit, and have some professional advice.

I went on TV recently and it was pitiful. At least, according to my wife. I thought I was pretty good, seeing that we had no script, lousy equipment, no rehearsal, and everybody involved, including the technicians, was strictly amateur.

Kim was watching, and she thought I was the best, too, which only goes to show you. (She confided to my wife, in private, that I seemed bored. And I was.)

But my wife kept up a running fire of comment "you look terribly thin. You were the graying one there. Why didn't you speak up? There was no humor at all. Why did you slump in your chair like a wet rag? You put your hand over your mouth once. What a dull program."

I think she expected a combination of Fred Davis, Pierre Berton, Walter Cronkite and Johnny Carson.

It wasn't exactly a moon shot, or an NHL game, though it was just as interesting as some of the latter we've seen this spring. It WAS a dull program. It had about as much zip and flair as Ed Sullivan interviewing the reeve of Hayfork Centre about the bindweed problem.

It didn't help much that I'd just come from a harrowing day, and had had three hours sleep the night before. Or that I didn't have a clue as to what the program was about. Or that nobody else did.

I was just another victim of a new game invented by the owners of cable television. These companies are highly sought after as a means of minting your own money.

But the CRTC is leaning on them and suggesting that they produce something besides money for the owners; namely, some local "Canadian content."

Our local cable company is in the forefront. It has managed to get itself a television channel, and is turning out Canadian content. Ninety per cent of it, so far, is time signals and the weather report.

But it has also produced several shows. It doesn't really matter what they are, as long as they don't cost anything.

So I've decided to cut short what promises to be an enriching life as a television performer. Fear of over-exposure.

Here's the way it went, as a warning. A chap I knew called and asked if I would appear on a panel discussion about education. I agreed. A student I knew was also to be on, plus another moderator.

We arrived at the studio on time. It consisted of a room about 10 feet square in the farmhouse beside the cable tower. A table, three chairs (we needed four), a microphone and a camera.

Two technicians were there, watching TV. They'd never heard of us. They called the manager, back in town. He'd forgotten about the show. He finally arrived, borrowed a chair from the farmer, and we did the dull show. Cold. It was shown a week later.

Now, I'm not knocking the whole idea. This sort of thing would be great for a small town, where all sorts of interesting things happen. And there's lots of talent around.

But the cable companies had better forget about how many hours of "local" content they can point to on their books, and start spending some money on trained personnel, good equipment, and organization, or the whole thing will be just another farce to slide around the rules and save money.

Two recent examples of what I'm talking about: On one show, we watched five or six buses draw up to a local school and the kids, one by one, get out. Fascinating, eh? Ten minutes. On another, we watched the residents of an old people's home for about 10 minutes, sitting in rows, facing the camera, waiting for "the show" to begin. Crass, if not cruel. But it shows on the books as Canadian content.

If it doesn't improve rapidly, it's just a con game, and should be exposed as such.

Silk and Pepper by hartley coles

Producing a weekly paper every Wednesday can sometimes create problems of which the average reader isn't aware.

Although the weekly image suffers by comparison to the dailies when it comes to speed, we try and make up for it with accuracy. Sometimes we come up with both when we are in an uptight situation like last week's.

Here at Acton central we thought the government's design for development for the Toronto-centred region was important enough to cover since it would affect this area very significantly at a time when it seems we are on the threshold of development.

(An outstretched tongue to the fellow who just said we've been that way for years.)

So, anyway, it was arranged that two of us jovial types from the weekly press who were interested in what pigeonhole the provincial government proposed to shove us, would attend the press briefing on the report at the Queen Elizabeth building in the C.N.E. grounds. The idea was that we would get the material, analyze it, write suitable stories and have it back in Acton in time to catch the 5 p.m. deadline of the Milton paper, which is also produced in this neck of the woods.

Nothing formidable about that, you say. Well, we didn't think so either until we hit the C.N.E. grounds and were ushered into the press room.

At the door were three uniformed constables from the O.P.P. who asked us to identify ourselves in a tone that suggested to do otherwise would be most unwise. Then we were advised to sign our names while one short-sighted officer peered over our shoulder.

Imagine our surprise to learn that once we were in the press room, with the speedballs from the big smoke, there was no exit.

At the door stood the minions of the law letting people in, but drawing the line at letting you out.

There we stayed until 2.25 in the afternoon—over three hours—when an official of the government announced in stentorian tones that the doors were once again open and all the birds could fly the coop.

A quick glance around the smoke-shrouded room was sufficient to see there were no visible washrooms, should the urge to wash hands or perform other ablutions occur. In fact, it looked like the only thing left to do was work.

Work in this case meant wading through a 23 page report, the complete text of speeches by Premier Robarts, the Hon. Charles McNaughton and our personal favorite, the Hon. Darcy McKeough, and condense it into something understandable for the people in North Halton, South Wellington and various other belts where they wait for government handouts with bated breath.

In the interval, while we scanned the speeches and report for material we broke bread with an official of the Department of Municipal Affairs who briefed us on the multiple things we couldn't understand about the proposal and set us straight on the things not included in the report.

When 2.25 arrived the big city daily types, most of them with only one article to write on a single facet of the report, broke for the door to hit late editions. We kept working until we thought we had the concept condensed and understandable. Then this frizzy faced fellow left the building just as Premier Robarts opened the official session with municipal officials and headed back for the Niagara escarpment, which the government plan announced would soon be purchased for use of the people of the province.

So we had the meeting written before it happened, in type before it finished up and out on the street the next morning to compete with the morning paper which always seems to have the advantage when government plans are announced.

This type of reporting is not unusual for the daily journals with large staffs but is a commodity weeklies can practice only a few times. After the job was done we had to plunge into the myriad other stories and articles we grind out each week. The daily journalists went back to their pads.

It seemed like a stimulating experience after the usual run of stories we're accustomed to each week and I was aware there weren't shortcomings. However, their extent wasn't revealed until I met a lady early this week who usually calls a rose a rose, a pansy a pansy and doesn't spare your feelings.

"Say," she said reflectively, "you know all that junk you had in the paper last week about green belts, muted growth and other stuff. What was that all about, anyway?"

I coulda punched her in the nose. But I settled my nerves by replying in an off-hand manner:

"Oh, just a lotta junk that might never happen."

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, May 11, 1950.

The last financial report of the village of Acton is now printed and while the supply lasts the ratepayers may secure a copy from the Public Utilities Office. Acton ceased to be a village in 1949.

Saturday's gale whipped a burning piece of paper from the town dump on the Third Line across the field to the Sprowl farm and the field was soon burning. Firemen were called from Acton.

Explosion of an oil tank at the rear of a stove at the home of Miss Emma Cole caused several hundred dollars damage to the home and furnishings. Prompt action by the fire brigade halted the flames before they had gained headway.

Miss Fern Brown visited in Hanover with Rev. and Mrs. Fosbury on the weekend.

Miss Joan Somerville has accepted a position in Goose Bay, Labrador, where she will take up teaching duties in September.

Mr. and Mrs. Jany and family moved to their new home last week on Main Street, the farm they purchased from Mr. G. M. Hutt.

Little Keith Andrews ran into the side of a car but fortunately escaped serious injuries.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, May 13, 1920.

The unveiling of the monument to the memory of their comrades who fell in action, by the members of the Acton Great War Veterans Association on Sunday afternoon will go down in history as one of the most impressive events in the annals of this community. The lawn of the Soldiers' memorial Home was taxed to accommodate the large gathering which assembled. (Note: The soldiers' home is now Rumley-Shoemaker funeral home and the monument has been moved to the Legion plot in Fairview cemetery.)

Bugler Robert Stewart sounded the Assembly and Rev. W. L. Findlay announced the hymns which were sung with spirit. Rev. J. Johnson, a returned soldier and Rev. Father Goodrow, who was a chaplain in France, addressed the impressive audience. J. J. Cooney D.C.M. read the names of the Acton soldiers who

"went west". Then with military precision he unveiled the monument from the folds of the Union Jack. Beautiful wreaths and floral displays were laid upon the monument by the G.W.V.A., the Ladies' Auxiliary, the Sons of England and the Roman Catholic friends.

The monument was donated by Mr. Nicols, the monument dealer. It bears a rifle cut in relief at the top, a floral design below and the figures "1920". On the slab above the names are crossed flags and the words "In loving memory of our comrades 1914-1918."

Mr. A. M. Smith, president and W. Coles, secretary of the G.W.V.A., were the directors of the ceremony for the afternoon.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, May 2, 1895.

Twenty minute sermons will be in favor during the warm weather months.

In judgment now I daily err as cycles past me whirl; I gaily call "good morning, sir", then find it is a girl.

On the 6th April the boys were skating on Henderson's Pond, on the 4th of May the thermometer registered 88 degrees in the shade.

It is proposed by the educational authorities to make the Model and Normal school terms one year instead of four months.

Bread, meat and sugar have advanced in price this week. Bread is up to 10 cents again. There is a shortage of cattle. \$1 will purchase only 22 pounds of granulated sugar now.

Mr. Will Jeans recently secured a dog of rare breed. It is known as a dachshund and also a badger dog. It is small with short crooked legs and a long body and is in favor with hunters for burrowing after foxes and similar game.

Mr. James Matthews, postmaster, is going extensively into the raising of small fruits. He has planted on that part of his farm at the corner of Main and Queen (now Cobblehill) Sts. 15,000 strawberry plants and several thousands of red and black raspberries and currants.

D.D.G.M. Thos. McCollom visited Walker Lodge and the company adjourned to Clark's Hotel where supper was served.

On Monday a rumour circulated in St. Johns, Newfoundland, that the Bank of Montreal has suspended and there was a run on all the banks. The rumour was traced to a number of anti-Confederation fanatics.

Photos from the past



PARADE PROCEEDS west along Mill St., approaching the Mill-Main corner. Most easily identified building in these old pictures is at the far right, now the Cameo Boutique. Duncan Sharp of Toronto sent along these old postcards for this series.

THE ACTON FREE PRESS
PHONE 853-2010
Business and Editorial Office

Canadian Weekly Newspaper Association

Founded in 1875 and published every Wednesday at 58 Willow St., Acton, Ontario. Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the C.W.N.A. and O.W.N.A. Advertising rates on request. Subscriptions payable in advance. \$8.00 in Canada; \$9.00 in all countries other than Canada. Single copies 15 cents. Second class mail Registration Number - 0515. Advertising is accepted on the condition that, in the event of typographical error, that portion of the advertising space occupied by the erroneous item, together with reasonable allowance for signature, will not be charged for but the balance of the advertisement will be paid for at the applicable rate. In the event of a wrong price, error advertising space or services at a wrong price, goods or services may not be sold. Advertising is merely an offer to sell, and may be withdrawn at any time.

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