

Acton researcher explodes groundhog myth

By the editor
It is not without trepidation that The Free Press this week explodes the popular myth about the groundhog and its shadow.

Popular belief has assumed for centuries that each February 2nd groundhogs emerge from their winter's nap to act as weather prophets. If they see their shadow, legend says there is sure to be another six weeks of winter and Mr. Woodchuck trots back to his den. If he doesn't, the furry beast stays up to watch Spring wait gently in on the breeze.

This week The Free Press consulted University of Guelph groundhog expert Murray Smith Jr. about this widespread belief. What does he say?

Bunk, he says, just plain bunk.

Not in so many words, mind you, but with facts, statistics and the results of two years of study of the animals on a 22 acre field on the north-east corner of the university campus.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Smith, Sr., Mill Street, Murray is working towards an M.Sc. thesis in collaboration with two other

men, on whether groundhogs have territories.

Their observations have deduced that:

1. Joe Groundhog is still hibernating in a chamber sealed off from other burrow passages on February 2, in this part of the world, anyway.

2. During his winter siesta other animals such as rabbits and skunks inhabit his burrow system while he snoozes contentedly at a body temperature of 45 degrees F., his heart beating at a rate of five strokes per minute and breathing only once every four to six minutes.

3. The earliest date a groundhog emerged from his den last year was February 22, 20 days too late for his date with the crystal ball. During the years 1856-57-58 the earliest recorded appearance of a groundhog was on March 5—over a month late.

4. It's true—Poppa Groundhog is the first to stick his nose out of the burrow and a few days later they are followed by adult females. Junior emerges last, along with his



sisters. Findings of the University trio disclose that groundhogs have dug up through as much as three feet of snow. Last year they pushed through 18 inches of the white stuff, by actual measure.

5. For the first two or three weeks back on top the groundhog does not eat and he loses two or three pounds. During the

hibernation period, despite the long fast, he only loses half a pound.

6. An unusual finding for researchers was that the groundhog is active early in the morning during March, when they also mate. But if the weather gets bad they go back into burrows until it improves, a fact which might have contributed to the legend.

7. Groundhogs have their young in mid-April and these furry kittens come up out of the burrow in May.

The trio of researchers headed by Professor R. E. Walker of the Department of Zoology, is armed with an impressive battery of facts, hard to dispute.

But perhaps there are some grizzled veterans among the rocks and stones of groundhog country who could personally vouch for the authenticity of the legend.

We don't know.

But we do know that despite the evidence, the realms of statistics and the debunking of those who know, the harmless groundhog legend will continue to flourish.



MURRAY SMITH, left, weighs a trapped groundhog while it is recorded at the groundhog range at the University of Guelph.—(Photo Audio Visual U. of G.)

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Storm closes schools blamed for crashes

Most highways in Halton were closed to traffic Tuesday afternoon as gale-like winds blanketed the roads with loose snow. Cutting visibility to practically zero and turning most of the roads into a glare of ice.

Dozens of accidents were reported on highways 401 and 25 in the Milton area. At mid-afternoon highway 25 was impassable both north and south of Milton as a rash of accidents, most of the rear end variety, blocked the driving lanes.

Storm came east
Highway 401 was declared impassable by Milton O.P.P. and motorists were urged to stay at home—or at work.

The storm apparently started in the Windsor area and moved eastward, striking Halton area around noon.

Reports from western Ontario indicate highway 401 was closed through to Windsor.

No full report yet
Several persons were injured and property damage figures were mounting but area police departments were too busy trying to entangle the mess of accidents to give any comprehensive reports on just how costly the storm had been.

Many schools and factories shut down early when the road conditions were broadcast and the added deluge of homeward bound motorists added to the traffic troubles.

Halton bulletin
Halton county roads department issued a bulletin to area radio stations at 2 p.m. Tuesday, reporting that most county roads were impassable.

Halton county Board of Education officials reported

pupils in the north area were delayed in arrival home but all were eventually home safe.

At one point in the afternoon a seven-vehicle pile-up was reported at Speyside and one motorist who made it through from Palermo to Milton said he saw 15 cars either ditched or involved in accidents.

Acton community centre shut down operations at 7 last night (Tuesday) after only a handful of boys showed up for the 8 o'clock hockey school.

School buses bringing rural students to Acton's three schools were not in operation to-day (Wednesday), because of impossible road conditions.

Acton District High School was closed except for a few staff members who were able to reach the school. The examination schedule at the school has been moved back one day. Exams will now go on until Monday, instead of Friday.

School went on as usual at M. Z.

Bennett and Robert Little schools for town students, although both schools were missing several teachers when the bell rang at 9 this morning.

Impassable road conditions prevented some workers from reaching their jobs in Acton this morning as well. Beardmore and Company reported anywhere from five to seven workers missing from larger departments that employ from 30 to 50 people. Several residents who work out of town were also unable to reach their jobs.

Groups tell county they need grants

Controversy over an attempt by Halton county council to stop issuing grants to agricultural and charitable organizations resulted in six delegations and an hour's discussion at the January meeting of the council, held in Milton Tuesday.

But the issue is not settled yet...the question of grants was sent back for more study by the county's committee at a later date.

Recommendation made
Two weeks ago Halton's finance committee recommended the county discontinue the policy of paying grants at the county level. Some councillors felt individual municipalities were also contributing to these groups and the county grants were duplications.

Finance committee chairman

Reeve Allan Masson of Oakville said the municipalities benefiting from the services should pay the shot themselves.

Tuesday line up
Announcement of the proposed change in policy brought a group of representatives to council's Tuesday meeting: The Salvation Army which received a \$1,650 grant last year; The Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which sought \$1,000; The Royal Botanical Gardens which received \$10,000 last year; agricultural representative Henry J. Stanley on behalf of his department, the Junior extension branch, the Soil and Crop Improvement Association; and Halton Farm Safety Council, which sought a total of \$2,000; Halton Plowmen's Association which sought \$1250 from the county this year and Ken Murray who spoke for Acton, Milton and Georgetown fairs' grants of \$2,000.

Each speaker told councillors their organizations depend on county grants for their existence and urged the grants be continued in 1971. They all reviewed their organizations' work and said some of the organizations would either have to fold up or curtail their activities if the county grants were stopped.

Not chintzy
Reeve Masson told the council the finance committee wasn't attempting to be "chintzy" or mean but was seriously worried about duplication. "I don't think any one of us here is out for

killin' fall fairs, it's just a matter of who is to pay for them."

Georgetown reeve Rick Morrow, who sponsored the motion, said his personal opinion was that the whole policy of making grants with tax dollars was incorrect. Many people in Halton already donate their own money to these organizations, he noted.

Lack of priority
He also suggested there was "A total lack of relative priorities" in past grants, with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association receiving \$100 each while the Lorne Scots Regiment got \$1500 and the Botanical Gardens \$10,000.

Other organizations seeking a share of the total of \$20,600 in county grants this year are the St. John Ambulance, Navy League of Canada, John Howard Society, and Halton Fire Prevention Bureau.

One dissenter
With only reeve Morrow dissenting the council agreed to delete the policy change from the finance committee minutes and have the budget committee (which is the whole council) deal with the grants controversy at a later date.

Beardmore, Union sign two year contract

Wage increases of 25c per hour the first year and 23c per hour in the second year was the major change in a new two-year labor contract signed between Beardmore and Co. and Local P479 of the Canadian Food and Allied Workers, representing employees.

Beardmore employees ratified the new contract by a large majority last Thursday. Increases in shift premiums were another feature of the agreement, which expires January 17, 1973.

Weekly benefit payments are improved and continue for up to

52 weeks for employees with 10 years of service. Insurance coverage has also been increased.

Pay 100 percent
The company pays one hundred per cent of premiums for Ontario Hospital Services Commission and Ontario Health Services Insurance Commission, major medical and medical-surgical plans which include weekly benefits and insurance.

A new bereavement clause will pay up to three days' absence without loss of pay for death in the immediate family.

company voluntarily initiated a major medical (drug) plan and improved pension benefits. Pension payments were also increased to employees who retired prior to the instituting of the Canada Pension Plan.

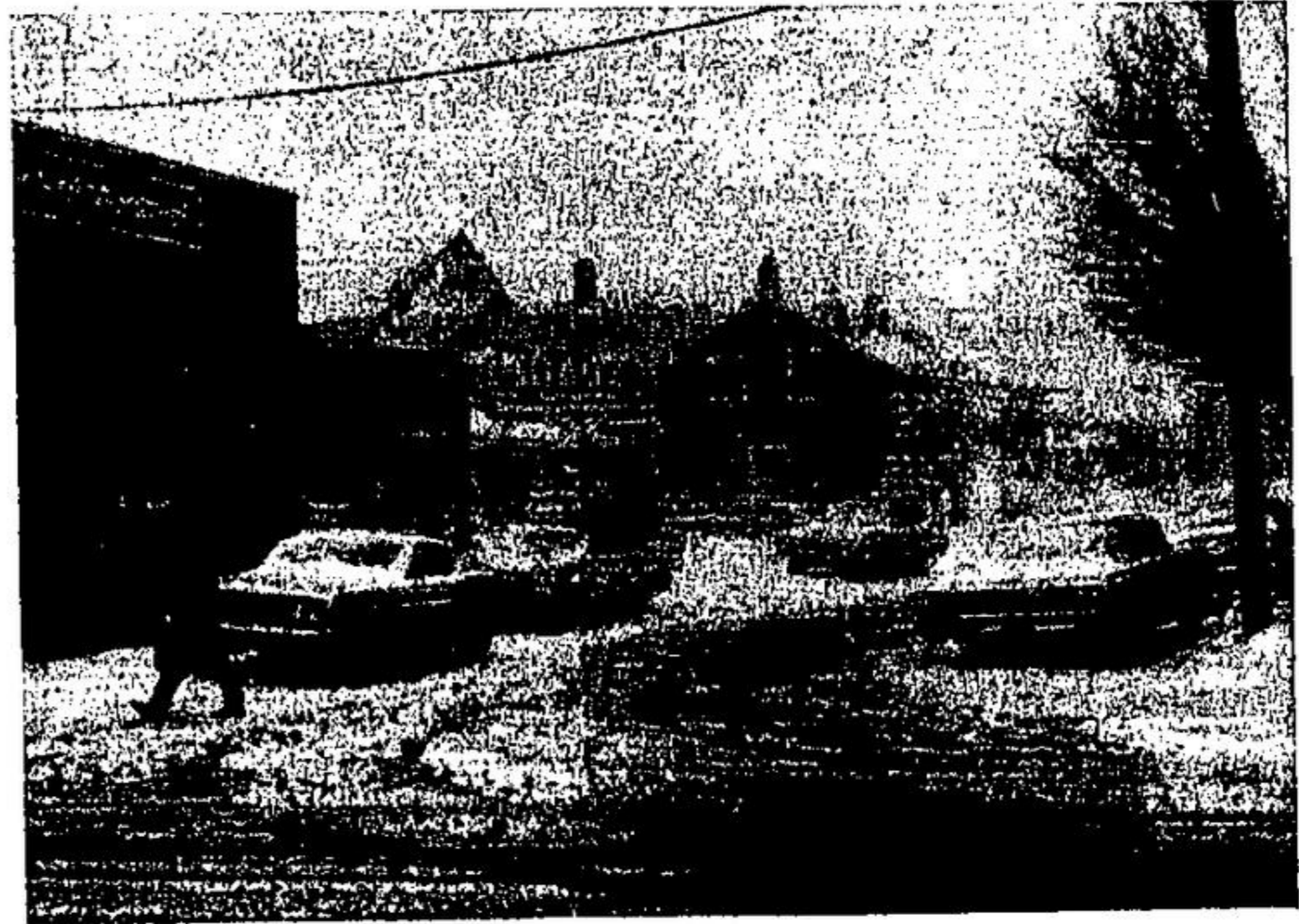
26 categories
Twenty-six new work categories have been established based on skill and effort required. There is a 5c per hour spread between each category.

Women's and men's jobs have been eliminated as such and a new list of job categories established to make it more

convenient to comply with the Women's Equal Employment Opportunity Act. Men, women and boys can now apply for the same job.

The Beardmore release said the company has a long history of amicable relations between employees and management, who co-operate in keeping their products competitive within the industry and with substitute materials.

"I think we have a real good contract," declared union president Wm. Spielvogel, "and most of our people are quite satisfied."



GALE FORCE WINDS whipped around Acton streets yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon, quickly covering parked cars with a blanket of snow and making visibility almost impossible. This picture was taken at the corner of Mill and Willow Streets about 1.30.—(Staff Photo)

Assault charges withdrawn Mon.

In court in Milton Monday, two Acton charges of assault were withdrawn. The two women involved had laid the charge and countercharge last summer.

Two fines of failing the breath test were levied of \$200 and \$150, and a fine of \$150 for refusing to take the test. A fine of \$25 was meted out for a liquor charge.

Three charges of minor traffic violations were laid by Acton police; there were two convictions. One fine of \$45 was levied for speeding and another of \$23 for failing to have a muffler. The third charge was dismissed.

Enforce two hour limit

Acton police warn they will be paying particular attention to enforcing the two hour parking limit in the main business section. The overnight parking ban will also be enforced, Corp. Ray Mason said this week.

He also reminds Acton drivers that cars are being parked much too close to the crosswalks. Acton's parking bylaw states that cars may not park within 20 feet of an intersection or crosswalk.

Lost pup!

Arena manager Harold Townsley has some unexpected help this week with no obligations to the payroll.

A black Labrador Retriever joined the staff without invitation and has since attached himself to the manager. Flattered by the female attention, Mr. Townsley still feels the owner may be looking for this good looking pup and sends out an S.O.S.

He can be reached at the community centre.

Shinnyists shiver in shower

Inefficiency of Acton arena's gas water heater is creating problems for hockey teams, according to arena manager Harold Townsley.

"Teams can't shower, unless they all get in at once," he told Acton Parks and Recreation Committee members, Thursday night. "The last ones in get cold water," he said.

New heater
Mr. Townsley recommended a new heater be installed and also asked the committee to consider

purchase a water softener. Hot chocolate and coffee machines in the committee's arena booth are becoming clogged up with lime, he explained.

Installation of a water softener would cost the committee \$329. A water softener could be rented for \$7 per month.

Property committee was instructed to investigate the possibility of purchasing a tarpaulin to keep cold air out of the room at the back of the building, which houses the ice

resurfacing machine. Mr. Townsley told the committee unusually cold weather has helped form a sheet of ice on the floor of the room.

Need ads
Mr. Townsley also reported he has room for 14 more advertising signs in the arena. Subscribers receive 32 square feet of advertising for \$50 per year. New subscribers are also charged \$45 to have their sign painted. Space is rented on a two year contract basis.

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Malcolm boards Coats' wagon

Newly elected parks and recreation vice-chairman Gil Malcolm has climbed aboard Councillor Bill Coats' bandwagon, advocating an early start on plans for Acton's centennial celebrations in 1973.

The vice-chairman came out in favor of early planning at Thursday night's parks and recreation meeting. Councillor Coats has already brought the

matter to the attention of town council.

Chairman Hugh Patterson backed Mr. Malcolm's suggestion. "We should think ahead," he said. "We certainly didn't for Canada's centennial year. We started in January and came up with nothing." Councillor Peter Marks promised to see parks and recreation has representation on the town's centennial committee.

O.P.P. charge

The first town O.P.P. charge against an impaired driver of a snowmobile was laid early Saturday morning.

An Acton area man, returning home at 12.15 a.m., was stopped for a routine check of his registration, and later charged with failing to pass the breath test in Milton. He is the first snowmobile driver to be charged here by the Acton detachment.

The police have received a directive to check registrations of snowmobile operators.

Ringers?

Esqueuing council is considering a letter from the town of Georgetown, challenging the council to compete in snowmobile races set up by the Georgetown Jaycees.

It was suggested at council, in view of doubts on their mobility ability, that they bring in professionals as with all their gear on, nobody could tell the difference anyhow.

Reeve asks consideration

Reeve Tom Hill has asked Esqueuing township residents, when clearing their drives, give consideration to where they put snow.

"Some residents with front end loaders have been trying to pack it into the bank left by the snowplow. This builds out onto the road and is rock-hard to run into."

He explained further, it's not only snowplows he's worrying about, but a car that has moved to the side of the road to let another pass, might hit this "abutment". This also applies to snow thrown from a drive onto the road.

Permits show

'70 growth

In 1970 69 building permits were issued in Acton with a total value of \$1,116,659. The applications show diversified and steady growth in the town.

Mrs. Lorna Clarke in the town office compiled the figures for the Free Press with breakdown of the building permits into categories.

Apartments, homes

Residential permits were issued each month of the past year except January, with the biggest item in February, \$305,000 worth of building at the Valleyview Apartment on Churchill Road N. followed by \$194,596 in April for Monex subdivision on Churchill Rd. N.

Residential permits totalled \$649,096. Breakdown by months, February \$305,000 in two permits; March \$32,000 (one permit); April \$194,596 (12); May \$41,000 (four); June \$15,200 (seven); July \$28,400 (eight); August \$8,100 (four); September \$3,700 (four); October \$53,200 (two); November \$3,700 (two) and December \$1,200 (one).

Banks, stores

Commercial permits totalled \$345,013 for 15 applications. Monthly totals were January \$5,500 (one application); February \$55,993 for two, including the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce; April \$4,500 for four applications; May \$134,800 for three, the new stores on Main St. S., the Bank of Montreal addition and alterations at the Dominion Hotel; June \$40,000 for the Toronto-Dominion bank; July \$6,700 (one); October \$1,520 (two); November \$96,000 for Becker's stores at Churchill Rd. and Queen St.

One new factory

Industrial permits totalled \$106,700. The breakdown shows May with \$97,000 total for three, Acton Wood Products factory and additions to Superior Glove and H. K. Porter plant; July \$2,300 (one); August \$7,400 (one).

One school permit was issued, \$1,350 for addition of portable classrooms to the Robert Little school and high schools.

One permit for the arena was issued for \$14,500 for alterations.