

# Vandalism: the crime everyone pays dearly for

by Walter Kwiatkowski

In Acton, there are as many vandals in their 20s and 30s as there are in their teens, according to police and town officials.

Vandals are responsible for the destruction of street signs, shop windows, picnic tables and tombstones. Many who dump garbage on rural roads, are in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Vandals simply don't care about other peoples' property.

However, insurance agents, store owners, school principals, municipal officials, bankers, homeowners and the police do care.

They believe there should be stricter enforcement of laws. They believe there should be work programs for the people responsible for vandalism. They believe there should be more police in Acton.

Vandals have no respect for private or public property. Cars, the cemetery, parks, schools, recreation facilities and

construction sites are all favourite targets for vandals. They are usually un-protected, vulnerable and accessible.

Vandalism is a costly problem and strikes us where it hurts the most, our wallets. We get hit in the form of higher taxes, increased insurance premiums and soaring replacement cost. So, the more we pay, the more vandalism is a problem.

## Willful damage

A pamphlet published by the Independent Insurance Association defines vandalism as "willful damage to private or public property including break-ins, theft and robbery."

Of a number of people questioned about this definition, most of them replied with either "malicious damage" or "destruction to property."

Others, however, gave different interpretations of vandalism. Laura-Mae Cook, who works at the Book Nook, said vandalism was "unwarranted damage to personal property."

According to J.A. Meinen, manager of the Toronto Dominion Bank, vandalism is "the destruction or defacing of property."

"Destruction to private or public property" said

Russel Lee, a college student from Acton.

Most of the people interviewed in the sampling around town agreed that vandalism was a problem in Acton, though not a huge one. Most of these people thought something should be done about vandalism and many offered opinions how to solve the problem.

## Need stricter enforcement

Robert Faseruk, a resident of Churchill Road North, said "more police patrols, especially on the subdivision streets."

An Acton high school student, Marjorie Ramsey, suggested "stricter enforcement."

"More home control is needed" recommended Harold Denny, of Denny's Insurance.

Russel Lee, a college student, answered, "courts should make the people responsible work as a way of repaying for the damage that was done."

Churchill Road South resident Tom Hogenbirk remarked, "There should be more police patrols and more police cars."

## Vandalism costly

According to Ken Richardson, clerk-administrator for Halton Hills, vandalism is a costly problem for taxpayers.

Last year's figures showed the total cost of vandalism for Halton Hills and Milton was \$130,000. Of this total, more damage was to cars than any

thing else. Halton Regional Police Sergeant Wayne Jessop said that damage done to cars last year totalled \$64,000. This makes cars the most vandalized piece of private property.

It can cost nearly \$300 to repair a large scratch on the body of a car, said Bob Leopardi, manager of Superior Motors. Last year the price for the same repairs would have been \$200-250. A mirror costs \$30, tires \$80 or more. A total body job could cost nearly \$3,000.

Denny's Insurance Agency Manager, Harold Denny, explained that though a comprehensive plan covers repairs the car owner still must pay a deductible of \$50, \$100 or \$125. A deductible is the initial amount of money the car owner must pay himself. A comprehensive insurance plan covers repairs which have been damaged, other than by collision.

## Cars prime target

Several dealers in town have had troubles with vandalism. Cars on their lots have been damaged.

"We've found scratches on a few of our cars and a couple of screws missing," commented Frank Beddeman, vice-president of L & L Ford.

Les Pelitis, owner of Achilles Motors recalled "Yes, we have had problems. Kids would come with hockey sticks and scratch the cars. Some even walk on the hoods."

Cars are just one of the examples of the growing list of targets of vandalism.

Another example is the cemetery. Of all the public property vandalized it has been the hardest hit. As many as 23 tombstones had to be replaced last year, according to Richardson.

Street signs have also been smashed and the cost to replace them last year was \$5,000. The damage done to picnic tables totalled \$10,000 in a single year. Trees planted around town have taken a lot of abuse from vandals. Even manhole covers have been stolen and had to be replaced.

Recently a fire was set in the lobby of the post office.

Chris McMillan, did not know why it was done or who was responsible. "People come in. They drink and smoke and sleep in the lobby during weekends." Now the lobby is kept locked.

Brad Buchanan, Manager of McKenzie's Lumber, commented, "It costs about \$100 to replace a set of keys from a lift truck. They were stolen from the same truck we had vandalized."

Jeannette Hernandez can't believe that the nursing home she manages in downtown Acton has not been vandalized more. She stated the reason for that was "The kids have a good relationship with the people here."

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# The Acton Free Press

An Inland Community Newspaper

One Hundred and Fifth Year—No. 46

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 1980

Eighteen Pages—Twenty Cents



Clang, clang, clang goes the trolley. Three-year-old Chris Wilkinson discovered a new sound with the help from his mom Sara and Dad Robert during a visit to the Halton County Radial Railway. The street car and electric railway museum, on the Guelph Line nine miles north of Highway 401, recently opened for the season. The museum operates many street cars and interurban vehicles on the mile and a quarter track. The Wilkinsons, of Guelph, look to the Toronto Civic Railway's car 55. It was on display at the CNE last year.

## Region accepts new senior citizen building

The senior citizens who have applied for housing in the new 51-unit Elizabeth St. apartments will soon be receiving invitations to inspect their new home.

Halton's Housing Authority took possession of the building this morning during a brief ceremony at the site. In the ceremony the builder, J.P. Ducharme Homes Ltd., signed over to the Ontario Ministry of Housing which turned the building over to the housing authority.

An open house, only for those people the authority is offering units to, will take place next Wednesday, according to Anne Gabriel of the Halton Housing Authority.

Offers to applicants will be mailed today, according to Mrs. Gabriel. "They'll be offered a specific unit. We've already asked for peoples' preferences."

Pat McKenzie said he would talk to applicants who may not like the apartment which they are shown.

"It's the best senior citizen apartment in Halton," according to McKenzie who is a member of the Halton Housing Authority. The authority has more than 1,000 units in Halton.

Dolly Moulden, also of the housing authority, said: "We're relieved it's finally ready for the peo-

ple of Acton, who've shown great patience."

The final stages of construction have seen some problems which forced postponement of the opening from the beginning of March. Mid-June appears to be the earliest period for occupancy.

As far as Mr. McKenzie is concerned, he said the problems in the building have been resolved.

Rent in the apartments will be geared to the income of the residents.

A caretaker for the units has been engaged. There is a list of applicants. That list has changed in part because some people ask to have their names removed and others ask to be added.

## Market assessment rejected

There will be no market value assessment in Halton Hills, unless the provincial government initiates it, Halton Hills general committee decided Monday night.

Over the lone objection of Councillor Ross Knechtel, Halton Hills general committee recommended they advise the ministry of Revenue they do not want to implement Section 86 of the Assessment Act (market value assessment). Knechtel argued no one had enough information to make an informed decision either for or against market value assessment.

Robert Beach, Assessment Commissioner for Halton-Peel, explained the request must come from the local municipality and if this was done the assessment based on 1975 values would be implemented in 1981.

He estimated the average assessment would be raised ten times to bring the existing assessment up to 1975 market value. The total assessment in town would go from \$49 million to \$490 million but the mill rate would drop accordingly.

In Halton Hills where the three former municipalities are assessed on a slightly different basis, the change would mean the same assessment basis

throughout the town, said Beach.

Using charts, Beach claimed of 4884 residential properties in Georgetown, 1916 would see little change in taxes, 1062 would go down and 1506 would go up.

In Acton, market value assessment would mean out of 1815 residential properties, 296 would see no change in taxes, 695 would decrease and 823 would increase.

In Esqueving with 2085 residential properties, 363 would stay the same, 674 would decrease and 848 would have a tax increase. In farm properties 145 would stay the same, 230 would decrease and 334 would increase.

Beach said vacant buildable land in Esqueving is assessed at a low value at present, usually at five per cent of market value. He said most homes in town are assessed at one-tenth of market value, at present.

In reply to a question from Councillor Roy Booth, Beach said if a lot is proven it cannot be built upon for some reason, the assessment would be reduced. He explained a house and lot is assessed as a package.

Councillor Pat Patterson asked if someone with a house on three acres would pay more than someone with the

identical house on ¾ acre.

Beach said the three acre owner would pay more, but said there is a breaking point.

He said there is a special rate for farms, around \$600 an acre, no matter what the buying price.

Councillor Russ Miller commented, "Then the speculators get the breaks."

Beach disagreed, saying as long as it is farm it doesn't matter who owns it.

Patterson asked who is qualified to determine whether land is class one, two or six.

Beach said soil maps from the Ministry of Agriculture, are used, and staff with farm training are used for the purpose.

Patterson said in Milton where market value has been established he heard there have been 800 appeals.

"No, there are 1200," retorted Beach, which he estimated is 12 per cent of the population.

Patterson contended the provincial government will thrust market value down the municipalities' throats eventually, but hoped council could set it back for five to ten years.

Asked by Miller how many municipalities in Halton-Peel had voted for market value assessment, Beach

replied, "In the whole of Halton and Peel only Milton has gone for it."

The assessment commissioner explained that if council requests market value assessment, there would be a series of public meetings, and the explanation of the working out of individual tax bills.

An example of the already prepared brochure of a house assessed at the market value of \$60,000, says to divide by 1,000, making \$6, then multiply by the mill rate. In the example a mill rate of 125 mills is used, making a tax bill of \$4750.

Councillor Harry Levy said it seemed most councillors knew too little about it. Beach said he could come out for a longer session and emphasized he was not there to push or sell market value assessment.

Booth stated the existing residential taxes are shared throughout Halton Hills with Georgetown paying 44 per cent, Acton 36 per cent, Esqueving 26 per cent and former Oakville area four per cent.

He contended 45 per cent of Acton property taxes would go up, 40 per cent of Esqueving's and 33 per cent of Georgetown's in the redistribution. (Continued on Page 2)

## Fireworks display caps fun-filled Back to Acton Days celebration

Acton Firefighters will cap off the three day Back to Acton Days celebration with a bang when they present a fireworks display at Prospect Park Sunday June 29.

Any business or organization or individual wishing to contribute towards the purchase of the fireworks should contact Herb Dodds at 853-2423 or 853-2010, by June 6.

Planning is well underway for the third annual Canada's Birthday bash in Acton. The first organizing meeting took place last Wednesday night and chairman Terry Grubbe reported about 10 community groups will participate in the project so far. Mrs. Grubbe added enthusiasm is running high and people have come up with lots of ideas to make this the biggest and best Back to Acton Days so far.

It will be a long weekend of fun residents won't want to miss.

It all gets started Friday, June 27 with a bargain filled sidewalk sale. There will also be booths downtown in the mall. One new booth for this year is a fire prevention display.

Opening ceremonies take place Friday night at 7 p.m. with entertainment following. The Acton Legion Chorale is participating and a band will also perform.

To get in shape for all the fun and activity Saturday there will be a health hustle session downtown at 8:30 a.m.

Then comes one of the highlights of Back to Acton Days, the Calathumpan parade beginning in several locations around town and converging downtown. The parade starts at 9 a.m.

During the day downtown the sidewalk sale will continue and there will be booths featuring crafts, (Continued on Page 2)

## Decoration Day in Acton Sunday

One of the biggest Decoration Days in years will take place in Acton this Sunday, June 1.

The Acton Legion has successfully revived the 25-year-old program.

Helen Fowler of the Decoration Day Committee says a complimentary bus will take seniors and handicapped participants to Fairview Cemetery from the Post Office at 2 p.m. and take them back at 4 p.m.

The remainder of the expected 100 participants will parade to the cemetery from the Post Office, forming up at 2:30 p.m.

The service at the cemetery, involving placing geraniums on the graves of past members of the groups involved in the program, begins at 3 p.m.

Besides the Legion, the Legion Ladies' Auxiliary, Acton Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides, the IOOE, Acton Chamber of Commerce, Dublin W.I., Acton Volunteer Firefighters, Acton Rotary Club and Acton Optimist Club will participate in the program.

Decoration Day was started many years ago by the IOOE and later was taken over by the Legion. The past few years the Legion kept the program going, despite dwindling support.

A committee was set up this year and has successfully revived interest in Decoration Day. The final meeting of the committee will also be held this Sunday, following the service at the cemetery.

## Separate Board buys school site

The Halton Separate School Board announced Tuesday (May 27) it purchased the five acre Nelles property west of the Acton Legion as the site of a new Catholic school.

After more than a year's search and the failure of some proposals, the board made an offer of \$15,000. Other sites were also under consideration.

Board chairman Robert O'Brien stressed the fact that board has only purchased a piece of property. The board has no allocation from the Ontario Ministry of Education to build.

He went on to say the board has not yet received the site purchase allocation from the province.

## inside

You'll find Profiles concerning a cake decorator on page 2.

Some residents have a petition of complaint concerning a road that's not been repaired in 50 years. See page 6.

Eramosa Township's new tax rate is up a bit. Details are on the Rockwood page.

Acton's High School returns from the West. They gained weight and lost sleep. See story page 3.

A resident is complaining to council about the swarms of mosquitoes. Her story is on page 10.

New minor hockey rules do not sit well with the AMHA. Read about their displeasure on the front of the sports section.



Mark Greer and Malcolm McLelland with two of their adopted babies. The teenagers found seven Mallard eggs unattended after the murder of the duck mother. They have managed to hatch and raise three of the eggs. Photo by ROBIN INSCOPE. See story on Page 10.