

The Acton Free Press

Founded in 1875

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Increase police funding give Acton its own force

We don't often advocate throwing money at problems as a means of government solving them, but in the case of the Halton-Regional Police we think it might be the best solution.

Once again concern about policing here in Acton and surrounding area by the regional force has erupted as an issue.

Clearly it is a long standing concern of businessmen and residents. There have been newspaper stories on the topic in the past. Lorne Doberthien isn't the first person to put the rap on the force in a letter. Many times it has been a burning topic at public gatherings.

There are no easy answers and we don't pretend to have pat solutions, though we have a few ideas. We think Acton needs its own semi-permanent force which would still be part of the large regional police force.

It would be foolish to say crime hasn't increased in Acton and area the past couple of years.

It would be equally foolish to say it wouldn't have happened under the Acton OPP.

Crime is on the increase in Halton, our neighboring counties and regions, across the province and in fact the nation.

There are as many reasons for crime increasing as there are people willing to offer an opinion. Toothless laws, lenient judges, a penal system that simply produces more efficient criminals, uninvolved citizens, frustrated and sometimes disinterested policemen, family economic problems, slack parents, permissive schools, misguided, trouble-making youths, to name just a handful of the explanations.

So while the entire mess can't be dumped on the Halton Police doorstep there are still some problems here the force and regional council can correct.

The Halton Police arrived in Acton and Esquesing in the fall of 1975 and didn't receive a warm reception from the community.

People cared a lot for the OPP detachment here and really couldn't see any good reason for their leaving.

Also, the regional force, as an obvious symbol of regional government, bore the brunt of anti-region feelings which were burning very brightly then.

The first couple of years though there seemed to be a police force here. There was an office, not a store-front operation, for one thing. There was a detachment commander. There were a number of local officers here, day in and day out, as well as some pretty good imports from other areas of Halton who were posted here for six months, a year, in some cases a couple of years.

As time wore on the force developed morale problems, there was an Ontario Police Association probe, changes in the top police brass etc.

Around the same time the operation was centralized out of district headquarters in Georgetown.

Officers are dispatched each shift from Georgetown to police Acton. Sometimes an officer is here for months, more often than not they're here for a few weeks or days, and then posted to another area.

There doesn't seem to be an Acton detachment.

To many people in Acton they are just faces in cruisers. Far too many, including the small criminal element here, do think of them as faceless "ghosts". We definitely believe this is the perception, rightly or wrongly, of the majority of citizens.

Not only do many Actonians share Doberthien's views, but our complaints sound a lot like those in Milton and Georgetown. There are rumblings of discontent with the police in south Halton too.

Chief Harding says he can't run a Rolls Royce police department on a Model 'T' budget. We agree.

Regional council has been pretty careful with the tax dollars when it comes to paying for one of the most important, important certainly in the eyes of residents here, regional services.

Region taxes will certainly have to go up next year to cover the deficit and pay for delayed projects. We suspect ratepayers won't mind that much forking over even more to improve policing here.

Harding has made great strides in bolstering morale on the force and has shown ability to get a lot out of value for his skimpy budget.

With considerably more money we like to think he could make great strides in reducing Acton's complaints.

If taxes were to go up for policing, people here would expect more from their police and the department had better deliver or else expect much more criticism and discontent.

With more money Harding could establish a detachment here. Possibly Acton doesn't need a 24-hour-a-day police station, one operating from say 7 a.m. to midnight may be very acceptable to residents fed up with the 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. operation here.

With more money, more officers could be hired and more cruisers purchased. This would make the police more visible here and give Acton a greater sense of security.

Also officers could be posted here for hitches of at least six months so they can get to know the people and the people can get to know them. The majority of officers posted to a beefed up Acton detachment must come from the ranks of the 27 who live in Halton Hills. Being involved in the community but working in Milton or Oakville doesn't seem too satisfactory to many citizens. There is a need for a detachment commander.

Police must be encouraged to make sure residents are aware they view petty crimes, like vandalism, theft and burglaries, seriously.

One has to give the police full marks for their handling of major crimes. When a couple of females were attacked here and there was fear of a child molester in Acton the force committed men and resources to the case and seemed to do an excellent job investigating. They do investigate petty crimes as evidenced by the arrest of a local youth for 26 break-ins recently.

However, far too often the complaint is heard from residents that officers are slow to respond to calls on petty crimes and seem to be only filling out reports when they do arrive.

We think with money Harding can remedy some complaints, not wipe out crime. We think by establishing a more permanent force presence in Acton they will hear fewer complaints, receive more co-operation from the public and thus reduce crime.

Actonians want a little police force here they can call their own. We can't see why a semi-permanent force can't operate here and still be part of the larger regional operation, if funds are made available.



Those who teach have hairy time

by Bill Smiley



Well, the presidential election, the con-attitudin, and the dog-fight over energy have been thoroughly probed and massaged and turned upside down and inside out by the media. So what's a poor weekly columnist have to turn to that hasn't been beaten to death?

It's a rotten November day and I have a rotten, unshakable cold, so I think I'll have a few words about what is rotten in the state of education. And there's plenty. First, let's look at teaching. The post-war baby boom, a natural phenomenon after four or five years of sex starvation, is long gone. Immigration has slowed to a trickle.

As a result, along with the pill and wives who want to work rather than procreate, enrolment in our schools is dropping rapidly. Many of those red-brick shoe factories built so lavishly and triumphantly by the government in the 50s are standing empty. Others echo hollowly, only half-filled.

A direct result of this, along with the stupidity of the government, has made a teaching profession a very hairy one. Those who chose it as a career are almost stopped in their tracks.

With jobs vanishing, there is little chance of promotion for the young person who wants to rise in the profession. The others, who don't give a diddle about being a department head or a vice-principal, but like to eat and couldn't make a living at anything else, are clinging grimly to their jobs, looking over their shoulders to see where they stand on the seniority list, and lying awake nights thinking about the dread statement, "You have become surplus."

Becoming surplus these days is almost as bad as becoming pregnant used to be, for a woman teacher. For a man, it's even worse, if he has a family, a mortgage, car payments, and is near the bottom of the list.

For the young teacher, emerging from teachers' college, it's a nightmare. There's a solid line of older teachers, holding hands, to hurl back anyone who wants to get into the charmed circle.

I can think at the moment of three young women, graduates of University of Toronto's Faculty of Education. Each has an honor degree. One is teaching in Newfie, another in the interior of B.C., and the third at an end-of-rail village in Northern Ontario.

Ten or twelve years ago, these bright girls would have been beating off hot-breathing principals who wanted to hire them sight unseen.

And yet, the government still churns out dedicated young teachers who will face nothing but heart-break and frustration, as they try to get a job.

It's a vicious circle, and partly to blame are the teachers' unions. Long without much political clout, they now have quite a bit, and because of the past, they have an obsession with security.

Ask a principal. It's almost as difficult to fire a teacher as it is to fire a postal worker. As a result, and I don't care if they keel-haul me for saying this, the profession is riddled with teachers who are incompetent, emotionally or mentally. But it would require a Hercules to clean out this particular Augean stable. And educational leaders are not exactly built along Herculean lines. More like Mickey Mouse.

So what have we? Teaching staffs that are getting smaller, older and scarier. Some atmosphere for great teaching.

Solution? Dangle a couple of years' salary in front of everybody over 55 who would retire voluntarily, and accept a smaller pension. Many who are hanging on by their toe-nails, emotionally, would leap at it.

That would open the sluice for fresh blood, young ideas and new enthusiasm. It

would be a real shot of adrenalin for education.

Now we come to the students. They are not getting the best, because of the suggestions I've presented: tired old blood teaching tired old courses in a tiring old way.

But they're not giving the best, either. Many, many students are clinging to school as desperately as their teachers are. They know it's a cold, indifferent world out there. Thus, with either a good allowance from parents, or a weekend job that produces plenty of spending money, school is a place to stay warm, be with friends, and not have to get out of the nest.

Those are the older students. The younger ones, again in many, many cases, have not the slightest idea of good manners, co-operation, or self-discipline. They are boisterous, unruly, mouthy, foul-tongued and generally obstreperous.

They have almost no knowledge of the Bible, of basic human virtues, or ordinary courtesy, but base everything on the two dimensional teaching of television.

Now, let's have a look at the parents of these kids. In many cases, both are working, of necessity or materialism. They are too tired, or haven't time, to give their children some idea of decency, fair play, good manners, thrift, or any of the other virtues.

Broken families, single-parent families are common. Kids are left to get their own breakfast or fall back into bed if it's nasty out. They play truant. They get behind, blame their teachers, feel frustrated and resentful.

From this comes vandalism, retreat into dope or booze and all the rest of the sad story. Some mess, eh? It's enough to kill off many a good teacher in his/her prime.

Thank goodness I'm an excellent teacher, and not one of my students is like those described. Otherwise, you wouldn't see my tail for dust.

according to Babe Rozzell who was good enough to bring in a newspaper clipping of the event.

An article published in this newspaper, and written by Jennifer Barr was recently reprinted in Diabetes Dialogue.

Jenny's story was about Roger Moore (no, not 007 and The Saint) and his horse Poco who won a ribbon at the Quarterama, Canada's largest western horse show. Roger, son of Lloyd and Betty-Lou Moore of Acton, won the ribbon even though only 14 years old, with diabetes and a hole in his heart.

If the results of a high school leaflet are any indication, not too many people are interested in today's youth and their future.

Four hundred leaflets went out to the community asking for help in speaking to students on various occupations. Only 17 were returned.

The school wanted a list of people willing to talk to individual groups of students at a convenient time to discuss his/her particular occupation or career.

"Students may gain more insight about a particular occupation by talking to someone involved rather than reading a book or listening to friends' advice," according to the leaflet.

Sue Burns or Dave Jones at the high school can be contacted for further information.

Santa needs some help. Letters have been pouring in to him, and he has been answering them as fast as he can. Unfortunately, there are always a few children who don't include their return address. Now, Santa's a pretty sharp guy, but even he can't read minds.

One such letter is from a little girl whose name is Billinda. Her letter was printed on Sheraton-Lockport Inn stationery, and mailed in a cute red, white and blue envelope. Will Billinda's mother or father please contact me at the Free Press so I can pass her address on to Santa.

Santa also needs Jenny and Julie Quinn's address, as well as Stacy, who drew Santa a picture of him putting gifts under a tree. Kimberly Aldrich, who is four and Trevor Aldrich who is 5.

Back issues

10 years ago

Wednesday, December 9, 1970

Garnet McKenzie is new deputy reeve, and Norm Elliott elected a new councillor. Tom Hill became the first Glen resident to occupy the Esquesing reeve's chair since 1884, replacing retiring reeve George Currie. Russell Miller took over the deputy-reeve's chair. Newcomer Len Cox headed the race for council seats with another newcomer Richard Howitt second. Incumbent Wilfrid Leslie placed third.

Rockwood village trustees elected were Stan Harris, Bert Smith and Don Hills. Warren Parkinson is Eramosa reeve, Duncan McPhedran deputy, and councillors Bill Adsett, Ken Fair and Dick Strong. Reeve Anne McArthur was returned in Nassagaways with former clerk treasurer Don McMillan deputy-reeve. Councillors are Art Gibson, Cal McIntyre and Jim Watson.

20 years ago

Thursday, December 8, 1950

Cam Sinclair is returned as reeve of Esquesing, with Wilfred Bird deputy-reeve. Councillors are George Leslie, Wilfred Leslie and Walter Linham. Elected to school board are Shirley Armstrong, the first woman, and Stanley Brown.

OPF Cons. Ron Rupert has been transferred to Acton.

H. K. Porter Company has leased 7,000 square feet of space from Canada Packers in the former Wool Combing building to accommodate the Thermoid Division, which will manufacture clutch bearings.

Legion Ladies' Auxiliary members presented a wheelchair to Sunnybrook Hospital, Mrs. D. Rogers, Mrs. C. Maplesden, Mrs. K. Turkosz, Mrs. R. Agnew, Mrs. Elsie Roach and Mrs. R. Angell.

50 years ago

Thursday, December 11, 1930

The Gregory Theatre will reopen in two weeks, and will be modern throughout. No stops, the show will be continuous. There will be shows on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday afternoon and night. Prices are 15 cents and 35 cents. All pictures are 100 per cent talking.

The special feature of the meeting of the Young People's Guild of Knox church was the Christmas story told by Rev. Bennie with lantern slides. Songs were sung by a quartette of Messrs. Rumley, Splivogel, Mann and Smith, a piano solo was given by Harvey Hassard and a duet by Lols and Thelma Cripps.

The donation boxes are in business places for your donation toward the community tree. It will be on Christmas Eve.

Auctioneer Kerr is selling at the Guelph Winter Fair today. Mr. Mark Given of Limehouse is among the winners.

75 years ago

Thursday, December 7, 1905

Mr. S. M. Lasby is now in full possession of the Albion Hotel. Mr. J. J. Holland, who has moved to his brick residence on Guelph St., won for the place the reputation of being the best hotel in town.

The new rink is coming into shape well. Subscriptions to the project now total \$81.

The illness of Mrs. John Moore terminated in her death. She was a daughter of Dr. Green, one of Canada's self-sacrificing physicians who gave up their own lives bringing relief to patients during the cholera scourge half a century ago.

As they have done for 30 years past, the Methodist Sunday School will hold their Christmas entertainment on Christmas night.

The 57th annual meeting of the Acton Branch of the Bible Society was held. The treasurer reported \$47 has been raised this year.

100 years ago

Thursday, December 9, 1880

Some persons entered the Catholic church about a mile west of this village and committed considerable depredation. It is supposed the villains were tramps.

A number of the young folks attended the opening of the Georgetown skating rink.

Saturday night about 9.30 o'clock Mrsrs. A. Secord and Company's grocery and hardware store, on Mill St., barely escaped being consumed by the devouring element — fire. Mr. Secord was extinguishing the lights in a chandelier when a staple came out of the ceiling, letting the lights fall to the floor. The coal oil immediately ignited and in a moment one end of the shop was all ablaze. The alarm of fire was given and citizens rushed into the shop. Mr. George Havill pulled off his overcoat and with it those present stamped out the flames. There were a few kegs of gunpowder near.

The village constable should prohibit the practice of snowballing on the principal streets.



On the Leavell

With Helen

A former Acton resident was recently presented with a gift for his long life, from a Chiba, Japan resident.

Abram Thomas, 106 years old, of North Vancouver was given a Red Hood called "Akazukin" for being the oldest resident of that city. The gift was from Chiba's oldest resident, who is 102. The presentation was made by Lions Gate Hospital. Vancouver and Chiba are sister cities.

Mr. Thomas used to live near town on the Fourth Line of Erin Twp. Folks around here knew him as Jack or Johnny Thomas,