

The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

Founded in 1875

Published every Wednesday by Metroland Printing & Publishing Ltd. at 59 Willow Street, Acton, Ontario, L7J 2M2. Telephone (519) 853-2010. Subscriptions: Single copies 30¢ each, \$15.00 per year in Canada, \$30.00 in all countries other than Canada.

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Climb on hall bandwagon

We'd like to congratulate the nine members of Halton Hills council who voted last week to give the citizens of Acton an opportunity to save a piece of Acton's past, namely the town hall.

Georgetown's Marilyn Serjeantson deserves particular praise, she had the courage to change her vote from two previous no's to a yes even though she admitted she still wasn't convinced the citizens could restore the building. Mayor Peter Pomeroy, Councillors Ross Knechtel, Dave Whiting and John McDonald again supported sale of the hall to Actonians and newcomers Rick Bonnette, Tom Hill, Phil Carney and Finn Poulstrup added their support. Again Councillors Pam Sheldon, Harry Levy, Russ Miller and Mike Armstrong supported demolishing the historic building, though we had trouble understanding their reasons this time.

in the future. We guess that could happen down the road, but knowing the spirit of this community and its track record for taking care of itself we doubt very much that anyone will going back to the Town for anything on this project. Besides all of the hard workers who have fought to keep this dream alive have something to prove to the doubting Thomases. The hall supporters have a lot of pride to go along with all that perseverance and energy.

And we can't fault the majority of councillors one little bit for declining to donate the funds set aside for demolition to the restoration project. There isn't universal support for the project in Acton even now so tax dollars shouldn't go into it.

We don't think the hall supporters were too disappointed to miss out on the money though going without those dollars will just make their triumph of restoring the building that much sweeter. They'll have proved their point, that Acton can accomplish great things and maintain its identity with or without Halton Hills help.

It was going to cost the Town \$40,000 or more to demolish it, there was nothing written that the Town had to take the building back once restored no tax dollars were going into it from local government, the citizens groups buying the building were taking all the risks and the restoration project is going to create needed jobs. So why were four councillors opposed to it?

They expressed fears of the municipality having to pay later to tear it down or worried the Town will have to maintain

Now that the long battle is over it's our hope that all of the community will now climb on the victor's bandwagon and make sure the town hall will be something all of Acton can be proud of for years to come.

It will be best for Acton in the long run if Sheldon, Levy, Armstrong and Miller are proved wrong. GM

Municipal complex issue finally on right track

Georgetown Councillor John McDonald took the words right out of our mouth.

Last week Halton Hills council set up a new committee to take care of the municipal complex issue and also voted to have a number of external studies carried out. One study will examine space needs for the municipality for the next 20 years, another will be an examination of the present site of the municipal offices on Trafalgar Rd. to see if they are suitable. Also studies will determine if it is more cost efficient to centralize municipal operations in one location or keep them scattered. The final study will review ways a municipal complex might be financed.

When this course of action was unveiled and unanimously endorsed by council, McDonald observed that if council had done this in the first place instead of springing a \$10,000 deposit on a piece of property nearby at the first meeting after the election, council wouldn't have left itself open to criticism.

We still have many questions and concerns about the whole notion of a municipal complex, however the independent studies should answer the questions. The studies may or may not alleviate our concerns.

Our initial concern was, to say the least, strange timing of the whole matter being raised.

Council was entirely right to discuss buying property behind closed doors last summer. But when they took a straw vote in camera and they supported picking up the option their agent, Bob Nicholl of Markham, had placed on the property in September they should have made the whole thing public then. True a straw vote in

camera isn't legally binding, but then as the mayor himself said they "reconfirmed" their earlier decision on November 22.

Regardless of whether they did it on purpose or not, it will always appear that the councillors agreed to keep their September decision quiet until sometime after the election so this wouldn't become a political football.

Had they done the studies they are now embarking on before putting down the deposit it might not have been a political football. To announce the plan to put down the \$10,000 deposit (on top of the \$20,000 spent on studies of the site) would have turned the whole thing into a political football and maybe it shouldn't be an election issue in its infancy. However, we think it would have been better to risk letting the issue be a political football, to at least have given the voters what information they had at that point, than allow the appearance of playing politics to tarnish the council.

We were outraged at council's apparent disregard of the voters' rights to examine all issues which will face the council in this term.

However, it's water under the bridge now and council appears to be on the right track with this matter finally.

Admittedly public outrage didn't match ours. From talking about it with many citizens it appears many weren't all that surprised or shocked. It's a sad commentary on us all that we have become so used to not being given the whole story on everything before we vote by other levels of government that when it happened in our own back yard it didn't phase most of us one bit. -GM.



From the editor's desk

Which is "pure" province?

By Gord Murray
Free Press editor

For years I've heard commentators taking jabs at Ontario's so called strange liquor laws.

Allegedly Ontario the "pure" is behind everyone else in liberalizing our rules and regulations governing where, when and how alcoholic beverages will be consumed. This kind of talk was particularly common when there was no beer at the ball park.

Presumably we were behind the States where you can buy wine and beer at just about any store, even in gas stations in the case of suds, or Quebec which has a similar marketing arrangement.

As I told you last week I've recently returned from my first trip to the west and I've got to say, they've got some strange laws when it comes to booze. You can start drinking earlier for one thing. Another is the government stores where beer and spirits combined are sold (just like Erin) are open longer hours, even in smaller centres I was told.

I only visited an Alberta liquor store once and I was amazed to discover the beer wasn't sold in any size larger than a 12 pack and there wasn't a 40 ounce in sight. Friends who have been out there 10 years tell me they haven't seen 40 ounce bottles ever, though a native thought they were tried out there for a time once. The same he said with 24 bottle cases of beer, they just never caught on. He did allow that since he had once visited Ontario he might be wrong and beer and spirits were never sold in the larger quantities we have become used to in Ontario. Another thing, prices were lower, almost \$2 on a 26er of Vodka.

Anyway I wondered if this practise of selling in smaller quantities had any

thing to do with trying to discourage consumption.

If it did it made little sense to me since they have another wrinkle I'd never seen before anywhere. They have this thing called off sales of beer in bars. You plunk down your dough and can leave with a case of cold ones. Hardly a way to discourage drinking I felt.

My friends told me they didn't think the Alberta legislature was any more concerned with discouraging drinking than any other government in the country, though they are clamping down hard now and possibly harder in the future, on the drinking driver.

They agreed with me selling cold take-out beer in bars wasn't exactly the best way to discourage drinking and driving. With all the wide open spaces out there and the easy availability of off sales I suggested there was probably a lot of road running taking place.

I delved a little deeper into these apparent contradictions and learned that Alberta is indeed tougher than we in Ontario are on the person who flunks a breathalyzer.

First conviction means a six month suspension of one's driver's licence as well as a \$500 fine. That's compared to fines of \$200 or \$300 in "pure" Ontario and just a three month licence suspension.

But, I was told, Alberta wants to get even tougher. Currently the penalties increase for second, third, etc., offenses. The government is considering increasing the first offense penalty to a one year licence suspension and minimum \$1,000 fine. And if you're caught a second time you won't be driving again—ever.

I heard Saskatchewan is just as tough, and is considering equally drastic action against repeaters.

It may sound pretty tough to lose one's driver's licence for good, but if it works then it is a route Ontario might consider following in the future. Of course a lifetime suspension from legal driving (I also heard they really throw the book at you if you're caught driving while your licence is suspended, but learned no specifics) does assume that no one will ever learn their lesson and smarten up and possibly there should be some way to earn one's privilege of driving back again. At the same time statistics show drinking drivers are a real menace on the road, half of the fatal or injury accidents in Canada each year involve at least one driver who has been drinking, so severe penalties are needed.

We're in the midst of spot check season. They are out west too. But they seem to be doing more of it than we are in Ontario.

I must admit I haven't been in Toronto this holiday season, so the only spot check I saw was one night on Highway 7 here in Acton in the Peel St. area. However, I have been in the city other holiday seasons and I've got to say in Edmonton they are trying, it seems, to catch more drinking drivers. You can't go much more than a half dozen blocks anywhere without getting stopped.

And I say more power to the cops on this one. I'm all for the roadside Alert machines and the rest of it. And frankly I'm getting a little sick of seeing the courts across Canada tied up with people trying to defeat the intent of these laws, such as the Newfoundland case which went to the Canadian Supreme Court over a driver presumed drinking who burped continually and so eventually beat the rap of refusing to take the breathalyzer test.

Tough laws and stringent enforcement is needed to stop drinking drivers and the courts should be as concerned with the intent of legislation as the wording and quit allowing people to squirm out through loop holes.

Anyway, the reason for this little lecture is simple, New Year's Eve is coming up and we're going with a group of friends to Kitchener. I, and I'm sure the rest of our party, have no desire to be creamed by some drunk on the road.

I can tell you I'll be driving down, but Helen, who doesn't mind a bit not drinking or only having a couple over a several hour period, so she can drive home if I over indulge will drive us home.

And it doesn't bother me a bit being chauffeured home by the wife either. I've noticed over the years a lot of guys who have had too much refuse to let their wives drive home from parties and other gatherings, in fact a friend of ours does it all the time. Let the wife drive home, there's no crime or shame in that.

I must admit I've driven on occasion when I shouldn't have too, so I'm not just throwing stones. But that was before I sat in court one day and saw dozens of normally responsible people humiliated because they didn't know enough to take a cab home and return the next day to get their car, or felt they weren't so drunk they couldn't drive, or wouldn't let the wife take the wheel, or the dozens of other dumb reasons for driving when you've been drinking.

No, I think I've learned my lesson without having had to pay a price, and I hope a lot of others have too as I contemplate driving this Friday night. Drinking and driving could ruin a perfect holiday season not just for yourself, but also some other poor unfortunates.

Back Issues

10 years ago

December 27, 1972
After serving Acton for a total of 50 years, Reeve Frank Oakes and Councillor Jack Greer are retiring from municipal politics. The pair of veteran politicians were presented with engraved cufflinks at farewell party at the home of Reeve-elect Pat McKenzie.

Mr. and Mrs. John Last and family maintained the family tradition of spending Christmas at Woodbridge with Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Conron and family.

George Cook was home for the Christmas holidays from Edmonton, Alberta. Because of the fog at Malton his plane landed at Windsor, with the passengers coming the rest of the way by train.

Peter Marzo is home for the holidays from Boston University where he is studying business administration with aid of a hockey scholarship.

20 years ago

December 27, 1962
Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Thompson, 71 Longfield Road, received a Christmas surprise early when Santa arrived at their home Christmas Eve in the form of two representatives from the Acton Chamber of Commerce. The couple received a cheque for \$25 for the best decorated home in Acton.

Christmas carols, readings and exchanging of gifts were featured at the December meeting of the Greenock W.I. Mrs. Calvin Aitken was hostess.

Acton Business Men's Pee-Wees rolled out the red carpet Sunday afternoon when the Red Wings from Rochester, NY were in town. Acton won the game 7-4.

Mrs. Mary MacAuley is spending the Christmas holidays with her daughters and family near Locknow.

50 years ago

December 22, 1932
Under the auspices of the Acton Fair Board a New Year's Dance will be held in the Town Hall, Acton, on Monday, January 2.

The Community Christmas Tree has been erected at the Mill and Main Corner and is subject of much favorable comment.

Ex-Warden A. Mason and Reeve Theoford, of Acton, attended the Warden's dinner at Milton last Friday.

The regular meeting of the Dublin Women's Institute was held at the home of Mrs. Thos. Near, on Wednesday afternoon. Mrs. Storey presided and the meeting opened with a Christmas carol followed by a prayer.

75 years ago

December 26, 1907
A number of County Councils will co-operate with that of Halton in petitioning the Government of Ontario to increase the amount of grants for good roads to at least one-half of the expenditure on county systems.

Messrs. M. P. Barry and Co. are still shipping large quantities of turnips here.

The Royal Scots Concert, Christmas night will be well worthy of patronage. The Methodist Sunday School Orchestra invite your presence.

Mr. John McMurchy has been engaged as Principal of Norval Public School and commences his duties the first of January.

One of the largest saw logs seen in Acton for many a day was teamed to the G.T.R. yards for D. A. Dickson on Saturday.

The jolly load of seventeen members of the Congregational Church and choir enjoyed very much their drive to Churchill last Wednesday night.

100 years ago

January 4, 1883
The installation of officers in Walker Lodge, A. F. and A. M., took place last Wednesday evening St. John's day.

Our chief constable tolled the old year out and the new year in, with the Congregational Church bell.

Mr. J. A. Speight met with an accident while working with a shaping machine in his shop last week, by which one of his fingers was severely injured.

Last Thursday, Duncan McDougall fell while climbing into a hay mow, breaking his right arm. Dr. Lowry was called to the home.

Messrs. R. H. Allen and E. Lucas, Jr., left on Monday for Gloversville, N.Y.