



Another six weeks of winter?

The groundhog who emerged from their burrows to predict the weather on Groundhog Day (today) have their work cut out for them. How can they predict six more weeks of winter when the weather has been balmy for most of the winter we've had.

This weather prophet, who emerged from a snow bank in rural Halton Hills was almost blinded by the sun. That means she can see her shadow and by tradition she should slide down her burrow for another six weeks of winter. No shadow, then it's an early spring.

In any event her reliability as a forecaster has been tagged at 30 per cent.

Board has \$6.5 million with Crown Trust, not \$4 million

Halton Board of Education last week discovered they do not have \$4 million invested with Crown Trust but \$6.5 million.

Superintendent of business and finance Barb Moore told the board Thursday they had two separate investments in Crown Trust, one for \$4 million due January 24 and one for \$2.5 million due January 7.

The board's broker had been instructed to remove the \$2.5 million and invest most of it in the Toronto Harbour Commission and the remainder in callable notes. The money was transferred and confirmation received from the Harbour Commission on January 14.

In the meantime, the provincial government seized Crown Trust on January 7, freezing its assets, in the wake of a government investigation into the sale of 11,000 Cadillac Fairview apartments. Buyers for Crown Trust are being sought by the government and if none are forthcoming, all investors may lose their money, according to Consumer and Commercial Relations minister Robert Elgie.

It was not until last week that the board learned that because of the freeze, Crown Trust's bank did not negotiate the \$2.5 million cheque that had been issued to the board's broker, reversing the transaction.

In effect, Moore said, "the cheque bounced."

Finance Committee chairman Bill Priestner wanted to know why the school board did not know until January 26 that the money had not been transferred. "What happened in that 19 days?" he asked.

Moore admitted there was a lot of confusion on everyone's part. She said they did not realize the fate of the \$2.5 million because the board received the \$16,935 in interest it had accrued, which, she pointed out, will not be returned.

She said the slip-up came in a letter about January 18 saying that the transaction had been reversed. However, the accounting department was in the middle of year end reports and no one looked in the envelope until last week.

The board's solicitor spent last Wednesday morning in Toronto, but could get no more information. Moore told the board everything was "hush-hush" and the lawyer could only obtain what information was on the television and in newspapers.

However, the board's lawyer suggested the board proceed to formally serve notice on Crown Trust demanding payment of the overdue certificates and the board go on

record with the Ministry of Education informing them of the situation. They also advised that in order to protect the board's interests, they should immediately retain a firm of solicitors and act on their advice pending final resolution of the issue.

"As chairman of the finance committee, Priestner said, "we are going to have to deal with the results of this."

He criticized staff on the handling of the issue. "We can't leave things sitting in a tray for six days. This is big business."

"We have to be optimistic and we have to be smarter," he said.

Trustee Len Crozier wondered if the board serving notice on Crown Trust would force them into bankruptcy. Moore admitted it could, but that was not the intent. "We are letting them know we are not just sitting around doing nothing, we want our money."

Transportation and Communications Minister Jim Snow, who was at the board meeting on another matter, jokingly told the trustees. "I'm sorry I cannot stay for the rest of the meeting, but I have to get back to Toronto. We are debating the Crown Trust deal and I have to see if I can get back some of your money."

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Hall restoration underway

The big job of restoring the Acton town hall began yesterday (Tuesday) morning. Ten workers hired under the federal job creation grant won by the community groups restoring the hall have been hired through Manpower and Patrick Cole, the architect for the project, and his engineers have nailed down plans for the project.

Heritage Acton, the new body taking care of the restoration project combining people from Acton and the Restoration Committee, has been created and the letters patent and formal incorporation should be final in a couple of weeks.

Heritage Acton isn't just for the town hall, Ted Tyler says. He noted this umbrella group can be used by any citizens who want to restore the Stone School, save monuments, works of art, buildings etc. in Acton. Much of the groundwork, licences etc. for the public to restore buildings will be in place for anyone to use through Heritage Acton.

Town hall supporters gathered at the hall for a tour Tuesday morning, along with Mayor Peter Pomeroy, Councillors Dave Whiting, Ross Knechtel, Rick Bonnette, Phil Carney, Marilyn Serjeantson and Finn Poulstrup. Workers on the project, the press, Cole and his associates and Fire Chief Bill Cunningham also were on hand for the tour. During the tour Tyler and George Elliott pointed out various features of the building, including heritage aspects.

Following the tour everyone went to the Band Hall for lunch and a presentation of plans for the hall and the restoration staff.

Tyler noted a number of special items, like the cell bars from the hall, have been located. They are looking at having a



Mayor Pete Pomeroy rips up the sign prohibiting entry to the Acton Town Hall yesterday (Tuesday) as workmen prepare to restore the controversial building.

nostalgia room in the hall which would have photos of Acton sports heroes from the past, the cell bars, possibly the clock from the old post office and other Acton memorabilia. Also, the fully restored town hall piano which is now at the Band Hall will probably be moved back home.

Tyler noted tickets at \$120 a couple are half taken for the big New Year's Eve party

planned for the restored hall at the end of this year.

Heritage Acton has been in touch with two government agencies, their identity is being withheld, seeking \$300,000 more in grants. Tyler said they are optimistic of a substantial grant from one group they have already applied to, and are applying for a grant from another agency as well.

If more money is secured they have come up with a "concept for the town hall which will make it quite the spot indeed." Tyler explained they'd like to put an addition on the building and locate it in the small parking lot beside the hall. This would feature a foyer with a greenhouse style effect and it would "enhance the side of the town hall." The plans for restoration and expansion look five or six years into the future and include provisions for the handicapped. There would be handicap washrooms on both floors, and an elevator on the inside of the building and an interior handicap ramp.

There would also be the great hall upstairs, boiler and electrical rooms in the basement, public washrooms, office or meeting room space on the ground floor, etc. There would be access from the town hall to the fire hall on the second floor for the firefighters only if the brigade wishes.

Cole explained the first chore is a rescue of the hall. He explained the roof is in better shape than some have indicated in the past, there are problems but they are repairable.

It has also been misleading, Cole reported to say previously that members in the roof are loose, they can be easily fixed.

The roof and floors will be reinforced to meet current building codes and various "exploratory work" began Tuesday so details of restoration can be more refined. Basement walls are being examined so excavation can start soon and Tyler noted the front bricks are about three-quarters of an inch out too far.

At the beginning of the tour Mayor Pomeroy took down and ripped up the sign which has been on the door for several years warning people not to enter because the building is unsafe.

Be sure to read next week's paper for more photos and details about this project.



Dorothy Jackson puts the finishing touches to one of her paintings as she prepares for the Palette and Pencil Club's annual exhibition which runs from February 3 to February 26 at the gallery in Halton Hills Cultural Centre.



Local talent will be coming out of the woodwork next Tuesday evening when McKenzie-Smith Middle School presents *Tunes and Talents*. Guelph Barbershoppers will also perform at the school's only major fund raising drive of the year. Some of the local talent are Michelle Heaps, Stacey Hillier, Lori Fountain, Heidi Lang, Pam Demontmercy, Wendy Norton, Jennifer Murr, Lee Gallant, Angela Jostasec, Tanya DeJong, Denise Schmidt and Tracey Bruce.

Mini golf, boat house among work projects

Building a miniature golf course for Prospect Park, the handicapped ramp at Acton arena, a tennis clubhouse in Prospect Park, a storage room in the Acton fire hall and a boat house and dock at Fairy Lake are among the projects suggested by staff for Halton Hills under a federal-provincial make work project.

Monday night general committee approved the list of projects the Town will apply to have funded under the job creation program. The various projects in Halton Hills would cost \$67,165 for material and another \$118,000 for labor.

During discussion of the projects, Georgetown Councillor Phil Carney suggested remedial work to eliminate a dangerous ditch problem on Holmesway Pl. be included in the list.

However, Councillor Ross Knechtel said to properly solve the problem, which was referred to budget committee a few weeks ago, would cost \$230,000 for a major storm sewer project. Knechtel felt it wouldn't be a

suitable make work project and engineer Robert Austin agreed it didn't meet the "intent" of the program.

Councillor Russ Miller asked if there was anything which could be done to eliminate the dangerous ditch situation which could be included in the job creation scheme and Austin said there were other more "labor intensive" projects which would be better than working on the ditch problem.

Carney withdrew his suggestion.

Councillor Pam Sheldon said contrary to what some think, she is concerned that action be taken to make sure the handicapped ramp is built this year.

Clerk-administrator Ken Richardson said they hope to have an answer back on if the ramp has been approved as a make work project before the 1983 Town budget is approved. If the budget is passed before the ramp is approved as a job creation project, then, if council wanted, funds could be found to proceed with the ramp this year.

Carney suggests

Use reserve funds for needed projects instead of saving for municipal complex

Council should consider reviewing the whole idea of having a reserve fund designed to help finance a future municipal complex, according to Georgetown Councillor Phil Carney. He thinks it would be better to spend the funds on projects benefiting taxpayers.

He suggested a review of the reserve fund, at Monday's Halton Hills general committee meeting while councillors were debating demolishing a building on property the Town owns on Church St. in Georgetown for a municipal parking lot. Money from developers' lot levies have been going in the reserve fund since 1977.

The Town had originally intended to sell the Church St. property to cover \$60,000 borrowed from the reserve fund previously to help pay for the Library-Cultural Centre project in Georgetown.

Carney said he didn't believe the Town should have \$650,000 in a reserve fund.

He suggested the money could be put to better use paying for projects like fixing the dangerous Holmesway Pl., Acton, ditches and putting in handicap ramps for municipal buildings, etc.

The reserve fund belongs to the taxpayers, so it should be used to pay for taxpayers' needs, Carney declared.

People are sitting on council to take care of taxpayers' needs, and if anyone thought

that wasn't their job they were sitting in the wrong chair, Carney said.

Councillor Ross Knechtel was concerned money was taken out of the reserve fund and now wasn't being paid back. He noted other times when council has borrowed from the fund the money was repaid.

He noted a delegation came from Acton concerned about the deep Holmesway Pl. ditches, expressing fears a child could drown. Council didn't offer to pay for storm sewers to solve that problem from the

reserve fund, Knechtel observed.

He suggested while it wasn't intended, council was basically saying parking was more important than children's lives because it wasn't selling the Georgetown property to repay the reserve fund or spending reserve funds to fix the ditches. He said he wasn't against extra parking in downtown Georgetown, he just didn't like the method being followed by council in not repaying the reserve fund.

inside today's Free Press

Tom Shepard was busy fielding questions at last week's drop-in and you'll find reports on what he had to say on pages 10, 12, C3 and C4.

The Chamber of Commerce needs a new president. Read a full report on their annual meeting on Monday night on page 18.

Dave Hall was convicted in the theft of skins case this week. See page 16.

Robert Little School said goodbye to popular secretary Betty Ashley last week. Turn to page 1 for a story and photo.

Science fiction is the theme of some big happenings this month at Acton Library and Acton High School. Details on page 2.

The BIA is seeking a shoe retailer. A full report on that group's meeting on page 9.



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