

# The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

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## All's well that ends almost well

Like Halton Board of Education trustees, Halton taxpayers are also breathing sighs of relief that the board has its \$6.5 million back from Crown Trust.

All's well that ends almost well.

Other than several weeks of anxiety and \$688 the whole fiasco didn't cost the board or public much, which was lucky.

It's heartening to learn now that board staff did know the extra \$2.5 million was trapped with the original \$4 million. Staff had received verbal notice of the additional problem, it was only the written notice which sat in an envelope in the finance department for several days unopened. It shows the board's staff had a better handle on the situation that people formerly suspected.

While it is regrettable that the fiasco cost the board

anything, \$688 may prove to be a small price to pay for the trustees to get a better financial handle on their plus \$130 million a year system.

We have been quick to throw stones at the board for spending our money almost like "drunken sailors" in the past.

We're glad to be able to throw them a bouquet now. It appears trustees have become very serious since last year's shocking budget about going through the nuts and bolts of their system and spending practices to find waste, reshape policies and generally being more accountable for how the staff spends our money. The new committee looking at investment policies is just another welcomed step in this recent trustee program of increased financial responsibility.—G.M.

## Thank firefighters and their employers

This weekend the firefighters hold appreciation night for all the people who help them do their tough job, particularly the employers who allow the firefighters to leave work when the alarm sounds.

In the wake of the big Thompson Fuel fire it seems a good time to give a public vote of thanks not just to the firefighters, but also the employers. Both are selfless and make a major contribution to Acton.

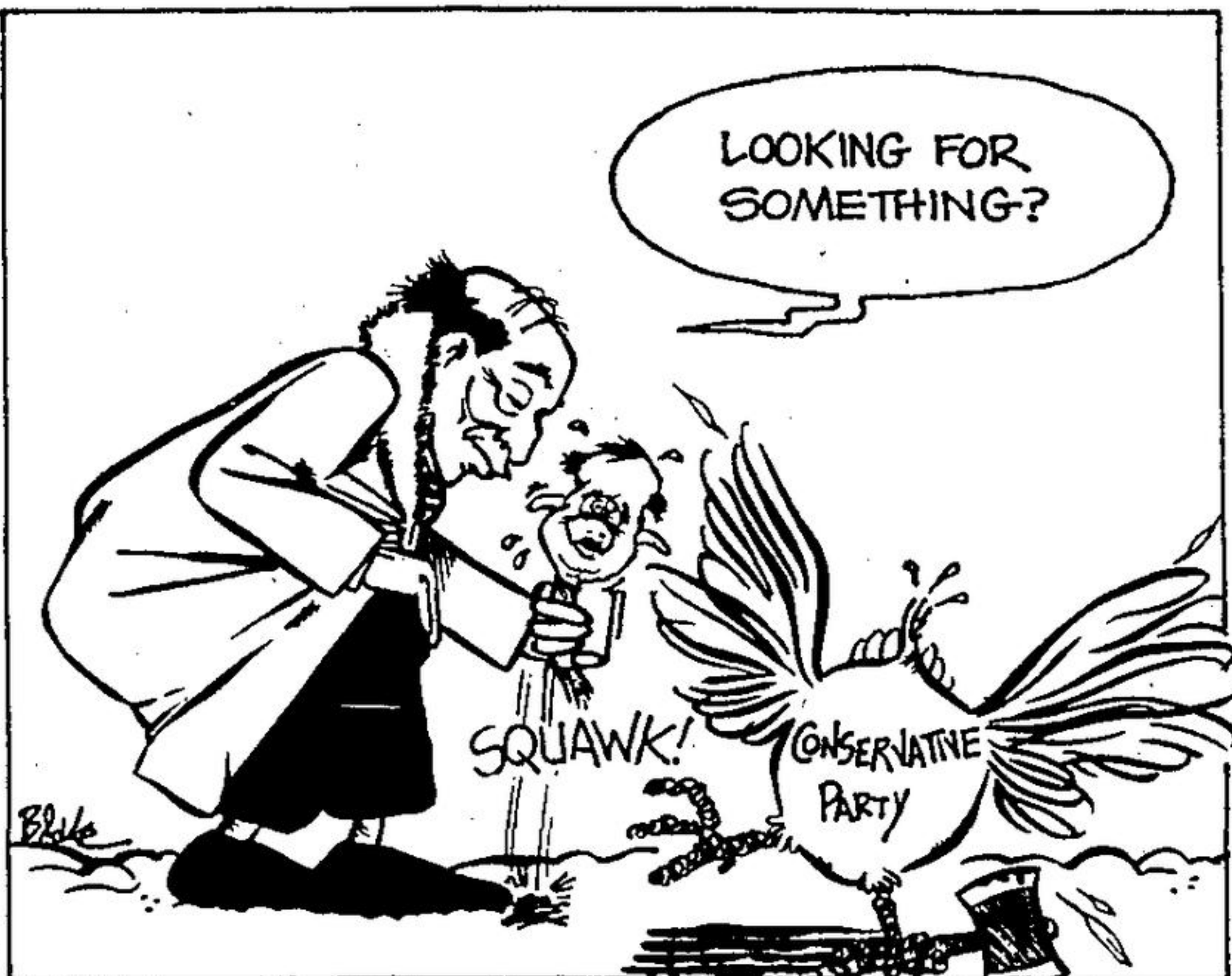
The Thompson Fuel fire could easily have turned out much, much worse. When our reporters arrived on the scene seconds before the firefighters got there (just a couple of minutes after the call went in) we had visions of the whole block going up, the flames were licking at the two homes on either side that closely.

Nobody could have saved Thompson Fuels, but the truly herculean efforts of the volunteers did save the two homes, maybe the whole street.

It's unfortunate that it takes a crisis, a big fire or a near death situation in the case of a resuscitation call, for the whole community to see just how efficient and competent our firefighters really are. We fortunately don't often see the evidence of their hours of training and practise procedure.

But the employers deserve a round of applause too. In the case of the Thompson Fuels blaze 22 men were lost to Acton employers, not for an hour or two, but from near 11 a.m. until after 4 p.m.—about five hours of production lost. The firefighters weren't just working fighting a fire for a couple of hours, after it was wrapped up on Young St. they had another couple of hours back at the fire hall cleaning up their hoses and equipment, readying for the next call which could come at any minute.

Well done firefighters and employers. Acton thanks you.—G.M.



## From the editor's desk

### Ross has financial smarts

by Gord Murray  
Free Press editor

People who deal with money and budgets are supposed to be pretty dry, humorless, fussy types.

Well, I'm happy to report nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to our Town's new budget chief, Councillor Ross Knechtel.

Regardless how you feel about Knechtel's performance at council or his stand on issues, if you've watched him at council for any length of time like I have, you have to appreciate his financial smarts. Ross does a good job of watching our dollars and cents.

But he's far from a dry, humorless fella. In fact Ross can be pretty witty and from time to time perks up a dull meeting with a joke or rib tickling line.

A case in point is the recent Acton Business Improvement Area annual. While the actions of the BIA are important to our town and certainly news worthy, I've never gone to one of their meetings and had a lot of laughs during the business portion.

At the recent annual meeting Ross was asked to speak. Instead of giving a speech, like most politicians would, he told a couple of jokes.

In our continuing effort to put a little humor into the paper (that's why we carry local broadcaster Jack Carpenter's RR 2 on the front page each week, our version of the morning smile) I'll share one of Knechtel's jokes with you. It's paraphrased, not an entire quote, but the gist is preserved.

Seems Trudeau passed on and was welcomed at the pearly gates by St. Peter. The chairman of Heaven's council asked our P.M. to employ his experience in handling meetings since the meetings up there became rowdy once in a while. He asked Pierre to sit on his left side and advise him, St Peter

was going to overlook Trudeau's political problems on earth.

A short time later Joe Clark also passed on to his reward. (Ross told this joke before Joe lost his job). While Joe had a really rough time in earthly politics, St. Peter felt he too could be of assistance in handling an unruly caucus, so he asked that Clark sit on his right side at the next Heaven council meeting.

Well here the three were, Pierre, St. Peter and Joe, sitting at the front of the chambers presiding over the meeting when an unexpected new arrival arrived in the hereafter to be processed into his new life.

The new arrival? None other than the blue eyed shiek himself, Peter Loughheed.

And what did he say upon arriving in the Chambers and seeing the trio at the front. Why, "St. Peter, you're sitting in my seat."

One last item, new business at council.

At every meeting the councillors are polled to see what they want to discuss in the area of "new business."

The subjects are usually questions for staff.

They generally result in the councillor getting some ink, the public being informed of an issue or concern, and sometimes some immediate feedback from Town staff or a report coming to council in the future.

It all seems to be a pretty reasonable way to conduct things to me.

But for some reason, a few veteran councillors object to this practise just about every time quite a few items are raised under new business. They scold their colleagues that instead of bringing things up at council they should call staff during the day and have

their questions answered then.

Guess their feeling is that nothing that isn't orchestrated in advance should come out at council to be scribbled down by we nosey reporters. Also staff should never be embarrassed and when new business results in a big story coming out, the whole council might be a little flushed. That's why I figure a few don't care much for new business.

The official reason the complainers (about new business) use is that staff doesn't carry around every tid-bit of information in their heads and can't get an answer right away for the councillor, but they could if they were called during the day. I don't buy that explanation for opening new business, so what if the staff doesn't have an answer right away.

Since staff is paid good money to keep the municipality running on a daily basis, I hope new business doesn't end and calls to staff become the order of the day. Not much will get done between 8.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday if department heads are on the phone with councillors all day.

It's been suggested at council, but never acted on, that new business be moved from near the end of the meeting to the start so staff can nip out and get the answers before the adjournment. I hope the next time someone beefs privately or publicly about the rash of new business items, that council takes that step and eliminates the official complaint about new business.

In conclusion, one good thing about new business that nobody ever seems to mention is that when a new business item is reported in the paper a lot more citizens are informed about something than just the citizen(s) who called a councillor about an item or concern.

## Back issues

### 10 years ago

February 14, 1973

Plans are afoot to move Acton's CN Railway station to a parkland location. Acton Lions Club would like to see the station, used only twice each day for rail passengers, preserved as an example of early Canadian railroad architecture.

Ellis Taylor, a Sixth Line North Esqueusing resident, told the township council this week he is opposed to opening Toronto International Dragway for Sunday racing. Ellis recounted several violations of the current regulations governing use of the track. Ellis suggested "they keep (racing) in Toronto, with their garbage."

Acton Y elected its 1973 executive—Chairman Pat McGreener, vice-chairman Allan Tremills, secretary Ellen Wisensz and treasurer John Last.

### 20 years ago

February 14, 1963

R. J. Cunningham was returned as chairman of Esqueusing School Board for another year. Shirley Armstrong is vice-president. The meeting was held at the home of Miss Ruth Evans.

Parking meters are being considered for Acton's downtown area by Town Council. Reports of traffic and parking problems indicate the two-hour parking bylaw has failed to solve the problems on Main and Mill Streets. Reeve H. H. Hinton opposed the meter proposal, saying the council should attempt instead to enforce the two-hour limit.

Acton firefighters were called to Milton to help fight the blaze which levelled the 100-year-old Milton flour mill.

### 50 years ago

February 18, 1933

All councillors agreed to a 20 per cent reduction in salary. H. N. Farmer, clerk and treasurer, has the same salary, \$350 per annum. R. J. MacPherson, Municipal Officer received \$1,215 last year, cut from \$1,350 the year before, and this was cut this year to \$1,093.50. Chief MacPherson said he was not paid for assisting the Provincial Police. He ran his own car for the benefit of the municipality and last year travelled over 1,000 miles securing jobs for unemployed men on the farms.

Jas. Mills, who is paid \$3 per day for days worked, will receive \$2.70 a day. The standard wage for teams and trucks is 50 cents an hour and laborers 20 cents per hour.

Nightwatchman E. E. Harrop's salary remains at \$37.50 per month from the municipality and \$1 a month from the various merchants. The position will be reviewed.

### 75 years ago

February 13, 1908

The two week storm has abated and roads are fairly well broken. There is much need for removal of snow on the main streets of the village.

Rev. Father Feeney concluded a decade as pastor of St. Joseph's church. He has been longer in his present charge than any other pastor in town. He is very much beloved.

It very much looks as if the Disciples congregation has definitely decided to discontinue the use of their church at the corner of Church and John St. as a place of worship permanently. The electrician has been ordered to remove the metre and fixtures. This building would make a fine place for a gymnasium and reading room.

### 100 years ago

February 22, 1883

The skating carnival on Tuesday evening was largely attended. The competition for costume prizes was keen.

Mr. Max Secord was the subject of a most painful operation at The Eye and Ear Infirmary, Toronto, in the removal of a tumor of considerable size from his right eye. Woolen and cotton hosiery is being manufactured in the premises known as Rockwood Academy. Mr. Alex McMillan calls his new business Academy Knitting Works.

Those heaps of coal ashes about town are unsightly. The social at Mr. Gray's residence raised \$18 for the Rockwood library fund.

The \$25 collected Sunday morning at Rockwood Presbyterian Church are to help finish a new church in Muskoka.

## Coles' slaw Crewsons Corners is ready to expand again

A neighboring daily newspaper detailed a story from Crewsons Corners this week outlining the fact Eramosa Township has set aside some 60 acres for industry in the triangle bounded by the CN tracks, 7 Highway and the Seventh Line of the township.

Ontario Housing recently approved an amendment to the township's official plan to designate the land for industry, the only tract, outside of eight acres in Rockwood, which is deemed suitable.

The 60 acre tract is poor agricultural land and has no services available except transportation by road but the township council going back to the days when Warren Parkinson was reeve and Duncan McPhedran deputy has seen a need to attract some industrial tax base to Eramosa.

Crewsons Corners is in the unique position of being at the joining of four municipalities, two of them in Halton Region and two in Wellington County. Town Line roads fan out from the hamlet bisecting Erin and Eramosa Townships and the Towns of Halton Hills and Milton, formerly the Townships of Esqueusing and Nassagaweya.

In that unique Bill which created regional government in Halton, the

Province decided with considerable pressure from then Nassagaweya Reeve Anne MacArthur that the township would be allowed to stay as a unit with Milton and thus retain some of its identity. Earlier, the plan had been to cut the township in half, give the land north of 15 Sideroad to Halton Hills or Acton, and pair the rest off with Milton.

Anne MacArthur raised such a ruckus down at Queen's Park and scared the then MPP George Kerr so much the reeve got her own way and common sense went out of the window in one slice of the cartographer's pen. So now we have the Town of Milton's borders within a couple of miles of Acton. Servicing and all the amenities rural dwellers expect are parcelled out from the old county town 12 miles down the road.

It has been argued that Halton Hills never really wanted the north end of Nassagaweya any way since it would have been a millstone around the tax base. Certainly there wasn't much in the way of taxes but events have proven that the top end of the township is an attraction for those people with enough money to drive a limo out of the rocks and serenity of the picturesque countryside.

In any event Crewsons Corners

sits at the corner of all these boundary lines, little changed over the century since it was named for the Crewson family who were once numerous and well known in this area. The people in Crewsons Corners once had plans to erect a growing town there. But when the Grand Trunk Railway went through, back in 1856, and built their station in Acton instead of the Corners dreams of grandeur faded with other dreams of oil and natural gas once purported to be in the area in large quantities.

The people of Crewsons Corners said then that the railway had made a clerical error building a station in Acton instead of the Corners. But like now the railways never admit a mistake. The station stayed in Acton then just a modest country village. Now the Corners is ready for another kick at the industrial cat.

The railways, of course, with federal transport minister Jean-Luc Pepin are still at their great scheme of dumping all the passenger service. Mr. Pepin has said that the blame for the decline in rail passenger services in Canada rests squarely on the backs of the Canadian people who never patronized it.

What an imagination that man has. He's got it upside down as

anyone from this area who used to use rail for travel can tell you.

It's an old trick. First of all the CN lets the equipment get outdated. Then they cut back on schedules, hike the fares, experience long, and repeated breakdowns and delays, severing connections with other modes of transportation, then they plead for an end to the passenger service they destroyed.

Now Mr. Pepin wants to abandon another 20 per cent of the rail lines across the country which still carry passengers instead of trying to build up a rail service to let people get off the crowded highways and enjoy reasonable public transportation again. Indeed if it hadn't been for Bill Davis and his Tory Government this area would not have any passenger rail service at all. Their GO Transit service has proven that modernizing and trying to operate a good rail service can be done. It's too bad Mr. Pepin never opened his eyes.

Back in 1856 when the railways first went through Acton there were men of vision at the head of the transportation of this country. Now all they want to do is close down service to the public and carry freight.

That's progress?

Last week I closed this column with a few remarks about the difficulties Frank Toth faces with motorists asking direction to the old Hide House. This week John Hoare, proprietor of John's Texaco at the corner of Young St. and the CN tracks called. He says he agrees completely with Frank's observations about the lack of explicit directions. However, John says that since he is in sight of the old Hide House there are few enquiries but there are scores of people asking where they can find Rockwood Gardens.

Rockwood Gardens, of course, a mail order business, is located just outside Rockwood but their mailing address is Acton. Naturally motorists expect to find it here. He thinks there should be directions to get there as well as the old Hide House.

He also wants to know how he can have a sign installed which advertises his business on the edge of the community knowing all the restrictions which exist from the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. Others can.

Any answers out there?  
—Hartley Coles