

The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

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We support Section 63

Last week a letter appeared on this page from a Newcastle ratepayer warning of dangers of Halton Hills adopting market value or equalized assessment through Section 63.

Councillor Ross Knechtel, who has spent countless hours probing the present assessment system as well as the implications of Section 63 and has long championed its adoption, took strong exception to the letter.

Monday night he presented the letter published at the bottom of this page to his colleagues on council.

He said the writer of last week's letter had a shocking lack of knowledge about the Section 63 issue. Knechtel called the letter a "masterpiece of misinformation." He noted Mr. Slyfield was offering to help local residents and Halton Hills deal with this issue and stated "I don't want to have anything to do with him." Knechtel indicated he's looked into the issue in Newcastle, as well as Mr. Slyfield, and found the letter writer's complaints aren't justified. "He wants the universe changed just because his taxes went up."

In conversation with a Free Press staffer at Friday's council drop-in, Knechtel indicated he felt the positioning of the letter on the editorial page and the prominence we gave it (as well as other Halton Hills newspapers) indicated the paper was now taking a position opposite to Section 63.

This is not the case. This

letter, or any letter, doesn't necessarily reflect our opinion. Publication of a letter or other material doesn't mean agreement.

In the case of Section 63 we remain supportive of its adoption here.

We realize that for some residents it will mean staggering tax increase, decreases for others and no change for some. We've heard the horror stories from Newcastle, Milton, Erin Township and elsewhere. We naturally never hear from the large block of taxpayers in areas where it's been adopted whose taxes went down.

We don't think Section 63 provides the perfect solution by any means.

However, we recognize that it is the only vehicle available to Halton Hills to end the inequity which has developed over the past decade resulting in Acton's mill rate being so far out of kilter compared to the rest of the Town. The only way to stop Acton from collectively paying roughly a quarter of a million dollars more in taxes than we fairly should is through Section 63.

As long as it remains the only way out of this mess, Section 63 must be adopted for Acton's sake regardless of the new problems it will create and the fact that some taxpayers will wind up paying more.

Acton as a whole must be treated fairly.

We will, of course, continue to publish opposing points of view and urge all taxpayers to become better informed and involved in this crucial issue.—G.M.

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From the editor's desk

Silliness under the dome

I don't know about you, but I've been more than a little amused by all this carrying on the last few months over the possibility of a domed (or is it spelled doomed) stadium for the Metro area.

By my recollection, I first heard about a dome when Billie D. mentioned it would be nice while the rain dripped off his Tory blues at the 1982, and probably last too, Grey Cup in Toronto.

You didn't hear much about it again until last summer. What with the Jays and Argos sparkling on the field and lowly little Vancouver getting North America's newest dome, it was inevitable that Ontario would start chasing the dream too.

Since then we've had a blue ribbon Tory panel of flacks study the idea and come up with a location on land Ottawa says it's keeping and right in an airport flight path.

Along the way we've heard about retractable and inflatable roofs; snow domes in the wilds of rural Oakville; a dome in Mississauga put up by private enterprise, not the government, but tied to a housing development; a dome at the CNE wiping out a chunk of the midway; a dome right by Woodbine (one stop shopping for bookies and gamblers); as well as the airport dome (too bad the planes the visiting teams fly in on don't land there, it might make the location a little more sensible).

In the wake of the study there have been surveys, freshened up proposals, even big ads in daily newspapers urging voters push for the non-tax dollar costing project in Mississauga.

I'm an avid sports fan, at least of two sports which would be under the dome, baseball and Canadian football.

I'm not a purist either, I don't think these sports have to be played outside to be worth watching.

I don't even care where it's located, though obviously rural Oakville would be nice because of local economic benefits and the closer drive.

But the thing I do care about is all this talk of financing it with tax dollars. A private dome would produce as many jobs probably as a publicly funded dome. Job creation should be the only reason why Ottawa, Queen's Park and Metro should pay for the dome.

Anyway, since I suspect before all the lobbying and fighting is over it will have taken as long to settle where and what goes where, as it will to build the blessed thing, I've just been watching the proceedings with amusement. I told Helen the other day I figure our son / daughter who will arrive soon should be in elementary school before we take him / her to their first game under the dome.

If you're in my corner and think this whole thing has become a little ridiculous, consider yourself fortunate that you're not living on Florida's sun coast.

The hot issue in Hillsborough (Tampa) and Pinellas (St. Petersburg) counties these days is dome fever. That's like trying to put one dome in Oakville and another in Burlington.

The papers and TV are full of it and local residents are having lots to say.

Both cities would like a major league ball franchise (it's rumored Minnesota Twins are heading to Florida next year), but clearly only one franchise will go to the bay area.

No matter, there are groups in both counties planning domes.

Tampa already has a big stadium used for NFL and USFL games as well as pro soccer. No matter, let's put a dome beside it. I couldn't find anyone who knew if they'd even looked at using that facility for baseball too.

The answer I got time and again was that the area needs a dome for baseball only because, now are you ready for this, people won't go to games in summer if the facility isn't air conditioned.

The story across the bay is even more ridiculous because of the two cities. Tampa is the one more likely to get a franchise unless St. Petersburg gets their dome finished sooner.

The St. Petersburg facility is to seat roughly 45,000 people with parking for 4,500 (there will be awfully crowded buses). They've picked out a site, even held a sod



by Gord Murray
Free Press editor

turning and big celebration the day the baseball owners were in Tampa to pick a new commissioner.

This dome's being pushed ahead by the county commission (council) and seems a few steps ahead of the Tampa effort.

There seems to be no desire to co-operate between the two groups, in fact they're gathering evidence to show each other's proposals will flop, as will the ball team that goes there. Actually what's going on sounds a lot like the arguing we're hearing up here, only a lot sillier. It's especially silly since both dome groups are headed by experienced baseball people (in St. Petersburg it's Peter Bavassi who set up the Jays and is called Peter the Great down there) and they've been warned by their extensive contacts that the majors will turn their back on this market, no matter how promising it looks, if the foolishness doesn't stop. Baseball doesn't want to choose one dome and leave the other area with an empty facility and look like the bad guy.

Another wrinkle just developing as I headed back north was a possible court challenge to force the St. Petersburg dome onto the next election ballot. (It's common that big ticket government projects must be approved by the taxpayers who will pay for it in the States, an idea we'd all welcome here even if we just got to vote on Halton Hills version of a dome, a municipal complex.

Anyway, with cold weather still hanging on here and the Blue Jays Exhibition Stadium opener looming in a few weeks, I thought you might get a laugh out of learning that people in Tampa-St. Petersburg just have to have a dome because they can't watch baseball in the heat. Wonder how they manage at warm weather football and soccer games, maybe they all bring portable fans.

What's happened there I rate a nine for silliness. Toronto's carrying on gets a seven from me.

Who gets a ten? Why Nashville, which has plans to build a ball park shaped like a guitar, if seen from the air.

Back issues

10 years ago

March 27, 1974

Mr. Justice Donnelly of the Supreme Court of Ontario declared a mistrial in the case of the Crown versus Thomas Bourke, accused of killing his wife Colleen in a Churchill Rd., Acton apartment last May. Defense did not call Bourke to the stand to speak for himself, but called two eminent psychiatrists who stated their opinions of Bourke's insanity. However, Judge Donnelly declared the doctors based their opinions on statements made to them by the accused which did not appear in the official statement. Therefore, these statements were evidence that was not properly presented to the jury.

Acton may have tennis courts this year as long as there is no private club according to a recommendation from administrative committee Monday night.

20 years ago

March 26, 1964

By an overwhelming majority of over 80 per cent, members of the curling club agreed to "investigate further" the matter of separate facilities. The meeting in the community centre last Thursday was attended by a very satisfactory 101 and there were 23 proxy votes on hand as well.

A new roomy library for Acton's Centennial project? That's the hope of the library board which will be the first group to bring a definite proposal for a centennial project to council.

Married 50 years yesterday, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cleave have received congratulations this week from a host of relatives, friends and neighbors. There was a dinner for 22 on Saturday and "open house" yesterday. They have lived in their home on Mill St. for the past 43 years and are very well known in the community.

50 years ago

March 22, 1934

The past week provided some of the best hockey at some of the best prices—two for a quarter and free groceries. The Crescents won the Midget championship, Woods, G. Footitt, Bayliss, Cross, Marzo, Jones, Tyler, B. Footitt, Buchanan, Frank Gibbons was referee.

Dyed in the wool fans went back to the arena for a game between married men and single men, with a ten cent admission. Winners were the single men, Byrne, Walters, Marzo, Mooney, Morton, Anislie, Norm Morton, Marshall, Woods, Huffman, Dawkins. Married men were Holloway, Fred Kentner, Gibbons, Joe Kentner, Anderson, Jack Kentner, Terry, Cheu and Arbie. Harry Holmes was referee.

Some action must be taken on the Murray bequest for Acton.

The Holy Name Society of St. Joseph's Church provided a splendid social evening for the members of the Acton Hockey Teams, presided over by Father McBride.

75 years ago

March 25, 1909

It is reported that counterfeit five cent silver is in circulation.

William Murray, of Toronto was committed to gaol for trial by Magistrates Harley and Kennedy last week for breaking into a car at Georgetown and stealing a caddy of tobacco.

Trespassers have been notified to keep out of the G.T.R. yards at the station.

A gang of G.T.R. workmen is engaged in putting additional hoops on the 100,000 gallon tank at the G.T.R. depot to strengthen the structure which will be painted as well.

There were two attempted burglaries in Town Friday night, evidently by local novices.

100 years ago

March 20, 1884

A large quantity of stone is being shipped from Rockwood for the harbor improvements in Toronto.

Mr. and Mrs. Anson Smith celebrated the 50th anniversary of their wedding at the home of their son-in-law Mr. W.H. Storey. They were married in the county of Wentworth in 1834.

A five minute skating race at Milton for the championship of the county was won by Billy Speight, 15 years of age, of Acton. Now he has been challenged by S. Mills of Guelph. The winner will receive \$20. (Speight won).

In the last couple of days, eight tramps were accommodated in the cells in the town hall.

Messrs M. Bennett and Walter Lamb sawed one and a half cords of maple wood in 22 minutes with a lance-tooth saw. Pretty good.

Our readers write

Constituent blasts Otto

Dear Sir:
When Finance Minister Marc Lalonde announced that on February 15, he was going to present the federal budget, Tory Leader Brian Mulroney cried foul because he was supposed to be away at that time. He subsequently cancelled or postponed his trip so that he could be present when the budget was brought down.

A few days after the budget was tabled, I was expecting Mr. Mulroney to present his views. I was disappointed when I did not hear much from him. It seemed to me that he was preoccupied with other things or perhaps he was absent from the House of Commons most of the time. If he had nothing to contribute, why did he have to postpone his trip?

I was thinking of calling our Member of Parliament, Otto Jelinek, to ask why, only to find out that he was not doing his duty in the House of Commons either because he was moonlighting in—of all places—a communist country (TV commentator at the Olympics)!

How disgusting! I think it is immoral for a representative of the taxpayers to be collecting his salary if he is not working for them, especially when an important piece of legislation was being debated in Ottawa.

If he cannot serve his constituents properly, why does the Progressive Conservative Party offer Otto Jelinek as their candidate for MP for Halton?

Richard Semple
3058 Viewmount
Oakville, Ont. L6L 5M7

'Enough is enough'

Dear Sir:
Enough is Enough
The above battle cry, written by a lady outraged by an unjustified increase in her property taxes under the 'Market Value Assessment program', was the catalyst which brought together about a thousand people in the Town of Newcastle. Until her letter appeared in the local paper, each one of us thought we were alone and

would suffer the inequities of this government sponsored tax program alone.

Talk to your neighbors, talk to your friends and if you wish to make your voice heard and express your concern, you can help us by writing:

Margaret Rodgers
1st Vice-Chairman,
R.R. No. 1,
Enniskillen, Ont. Canada L0B 1H0.

Complaints nothing to do with Sec. 63

Dear sir,
Last week a letter was published in the local press, written by a Mr. Slyfield from the Town of Newcastle. This letter is a long list of complaints about the inequity of using a Section 63 re-assessment. Unfortunately, most of his complaints have nothing to do with Section 63.

Let me list a few:
1. The Assessment Act assigns punitive values to small holdings.

He seems to be objecting to the fact that a building lot (rural or urban) has a much higher assessment than farm land. This is of course true, with or without Section 63.

2. Some taxpayers receive refunds of their taxes from the Province.

Yes, this is true. Senior citizens are granted up to \$500.00 as a refund of taxes. Also, farmers whose gross income exceeds certain standards receive a refund of 60 per cent of their taxes. It would appear that Mr. Slyfield wants this practice stopped. It must be noted that these refunds have nothing to do with Section 63.

3. Mr. Slyfield objects to the fact that homeowners pay their Property Tax with "after tax income". All business men and many farmers pay with "before tax

income." He is correct in his statement. If this is to be changed it requires some changes in Federal and Provincial Tax Laws. It has nothing to do with Section 63 or any other section of The Assessment Act.

4. The system of property tax in Ontario provides, in general terms, that the tax is related to property value, in varying degrees. The tax is not related to services received, except for such things as garbage collection and sewers. This system has been used in Ontario for many years and I am not aware of any move to change this. Mr. Slyfield seems to want his taxes directly related to services received. He is

entitled to his opinion, and it may have merit. However, what it has to do with Section 63 is a mystery to me and I'm sure it is a mystery to Slyfield also.

Mr. Slyfield makes no mention of the problems we have with our present assessment system. He seems unaware that in Acton we pay an extra 40 mills with no apparent justification, and this is just one of the present anomalies that only Section 63 can correct. Let's face facts. Mr. Slyfield says he is concerned about our problems, yet there is much evidence that he does not even know what our problems are.

Obviously, Slyfield has received a sharply increased assessment, probably on the value of his land. We are not given any facts, just a long list of complaints that for the most part have nothing to do with Section 63. Because of this, I suggest we are entitled to assume that his previous assessment was a long standing error in his favour. My thanks to Mr. Slyfield for his offer of advice. However, how can he solve a problem that he does not seem to understand.

Yours truly,
J.R. Knechtel,
Councillor, Ward I.