

The Acton Free Press

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Business and Editorial Office

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Pot calling kettle black?

Halton Hills councillors have been expressing concern of late that debates regarding the merits of minor variances at Committee of Adjustment are being held behind closed doors.

Councillors note they are conducting business without many in-camera sessions and think bodies which they appoint should do the same thing.

Currently Committee of Adjustment hears presentations in public, then retires behind closed doors to review staff reports as well as what they've just heard, and then goes public again to announce their decision.

We agree it would be preferable for the discussions by the committee members about the reports and presentations would be better held in public.

However, we wonder if the concerns of councillors, particularly Mike Armstrong and Pam Sheldon who have been the most vocal, isn't a little bit like the pot calling the kettle black.

We know we aren't the only ones asking this question. It has been posed by a few of our better informed readers, as well as a couple of council members speaking, for now, off the record.

Councillors who are disturbed by what they see as some inconsistency in the council's position, point to the fact committees like budget, municipal property and a few others aren't open to the press and public. Yet, these members note, almost all of the work in these two areas, as well as others, is done at the committee level. They describe council as a voluntary rubber stamp.

Isn't that sort of what Committee of Adjustment is doing?, they ask. Reviewing reports behind closed doors and then going public to render, not a decision, but a recommendation to council.

We see validity in this view.

It has been practise in Halton Hills for some time now to hold budget meetings, for example, behind closed doors. This, despite the fact the region

and school board budget committee meetings are public.

Closed doors have been employed with other committees too.

The press in Halton Hills has rarely protested this practise. One reason has been, admittedly, staff sizes. Another reason has been we don't know the meetings are on, they aren't listed on the agenda with upcoming general committee and council meetings. In fairness we'd probably find out easily though it wouldn't do us much good.

Only once in recent years have we shown up to cover a meeting which wasn't a regular public meeting, but a closed committee meeting. This committee was looking at the town hall, a big issue here at the time.

After a brief huddle, the surprised councillors said we could hear the debate and discussion, but not take any notes or report it from memory.

We declined. Our reporter decided if he couldn't report the meeting he wouldn't remain because after just about any meeting two or more councillors are willing to talk, as long as they aren't identified in the paper. Our reporter got the story from several sources later, if he'd stayed it couldn't have been published without all councillors feeling a trust had been betrayed.

In light of the Committee of Adjustment issue, a number of council members are questioning their own council's policies and some would like to delicately raise the question for review in the hopes of seeing more committee meetings open. Some councillors believe being more open with the public, particularly about budget problems and the municipal complex issue, would be advantageous for them.

We hope that if council does decide to make changes it isn't just an invitation to attend meetings so reporters can learn background, but not publish stories. This would only help plug the leaks, not better inform taxpayers.

What others say:

Are they kidding?

From The Oakville Beaver

If there's one thing not lacking in the minds of the region's school teachers, it's nerve.

Associations representing Halton's elementary and secondary school teachers have sent letters to the Halton Board of Education protesting the board's plan to tack on another working day to the 1984-85 school year.

We're firmly in support of Oakville trustee Len Crosier who called the letters "ludicrous".

According to Ministry of Education guidelines, teachers must work a minimum of 194 days, nothing is said about a maximum, yet these people are alarmed that they may have to work an extra day.

When the education system is facing major changes in policy, and other issues, to even bother discussing the issue is ridiculous.

Eulogy

Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on the snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.

Author unknown

MAYBE WE SHOULD THINK ABOUT THIS— ISN'T THERE SOME KIND OF GREEK MYTH ABOUT PUSHING A BOULDER UP A MOUNTAIN ONLY TO HAVE IT ROLL DOWN AGAIN EVERY TIME? —



From the editor's desk

Are we fibbing to pollsters?

by Gord Murray
Free Press editor

Are you one of the residents of Halton Hills who has been polled lately? If so, did you lie?

The reason I ask is that Robert Heaton Jr., a young Glen Williams man I first met last year when he was running for the Esqueping council seat in the by-election, called last week to tip me off that some agency in Toronto (he couldn't exactly recall the name) had contacted himself and several others he knew asking political party preference questions in relation to provincial politics. In addition names of a number of prominent Halton Hills Conservatives were tested against incumbent Julian Reed for the Liberals.

Did this mean there was a provincial election in the offing? Rob asked.

Who knows! I honestly answered. Premier Billy doesn't sound like he has any intention of pulling the plug and the theory behind calling an early election (to get a new majority before a Conservative government takes power in Ottawa, makes unpopular moves, and there's a backlash against the Ontario PCs. Also, get a fresh majority while the shaky economic recovery is still on.) is too flimsy to make it worth trying when there's no big issue.

However, as he always does, Davis left himself an opening to slither through, so we could still wind up with a snap vote. I suppose the polling Rob spoke to me about could just be a case of necessary data for the Tories being gathered now, just in case it's needed.

However, the funny thing was that someone calls me about some polling being done here the same day that crazy Gallup poll showing a big urge to the leaderless Liberals. In the wake of Pierre's resignation, comes out.

Now, if you think back a bit there was another strange poll there last year one month too. Seems to me the sort of leaderless PC's got a preference rating in the high 60s and then dropped back down to the 50s where they'd generally been until this month.

That poll that exaggerated Tory support proved to be the one time in 20 that a poll is further out of wack than four percentage points from actual vote results. I suspect

this new one is another of those one in 20 polls.

Sure a lot of voters only left the Liberal camp because of Trudeau, but the mere departure of the man, who we elected far more often than not, wouldn't explain such a remarkable shift. There's a trend back to the Liberals, but it hasn't been completed, can't possibly be completed until the Grits have a new leader, and might not be completed enough to deny the Tories power in the next election.

But, are these sudden shifts and surprise surges just mistakes, the wrong people were in the sampling, or have Canadians started playing a game which has become popular south of the border, fibbing to the pollster.

The TV networks are starting to admit that there are flaws in their exit polling since people aren't always candid.

Exit polling, more popular than ever this primary year in the U.S. with both the electronic and print media, isn't just designed to allow the media to make early predictions of final outcomes of votes.

They are designed to slot voters by various categories, for example age, sex, income level, union or non union, color, religion, employed or unemployed, etc.

That way they can report on a candidate's appeal, or lack of it, among blocks of voters.

I suppose there has always been pranksters, people who try and throw their own personal monkey wrench in the system by giving false information, as well as those who refused to answer pollsters.

But, as the polling industry has grown with more and more people being polled, and more and more poll results being made public, the number of people who see this as an invasion of one of our last privacies, the right to determine secretly who to vote for and keep the reasons to ourselves, has grown.

And they are striking back. In the states pre-vote polls and exit polls have come under a lot of criticism, more so than up here, though it's growing on this side too.

Some complain all this polling is taking the choice away from people. Also, people object to networks coming on and making election result predictions based on exit polls before the polls have closed.



by Gord Murray
Free Press editor

The electronic media, in the face of all the debate, as well as a Congressional committee examination, has been more restrained of late in making early vote calls based on exit polls.

However, the heat isn't the only reason, they're also finding their results don't jive. There are massive shifts in voter preference from day to day with many polls for primaries, indicating either voter waffling or else people playing games by not giving accurate information.

Since letters to the editor columns are filling up in the States with calls from citizens to their fellow citizens to either give false information to pollsters to encourage them to eventually give up the practise, or outright refuse to answer the nosy questions, it's a safe bet that many are climbing on the bandwagon.

And I say more power to them. There's too much polling going on, even here. No wonder governments seem paralysed at times, they can't tell from all these polls what they can safely do, so they do nothing.

And, how much of a role will the many polls play in the selection of our next Prime Minister by a small, select, almost elite class of Canadians.

It's worrisome to think such an important choice could be influenced by the results of that poll last week, which appears so unreliable. It's sort of a Catch-22 situation for Canadians.

The only way most of us have input into the selection of leaders and formation of government policy is through polls. Yet if we want to stem the tidal wave of polls and this reliance on them, we must quit answering or play with the pollster so the results won't be taken as gospel.

Back issues

10 years ago

May 8, 1974

"The area around Halton Hills will be out of gravel within 10 to 15 years," J.C. (Mac) Duff, Limehouse Quarry operator told general administration committee last week.

Representatives of Local 73, Canadian Union of Public Service Employees and Halton Hills representatives met with a provincial conciliation officer Wednesday in an attempt to iron out a wage dispute which sees the two parties seven cents apart.

Former Eden Mills resident Mary (Lowrie) Daniel was acclaimed Citizen of the Year recently by the East Rochester Rotary Club. Born and raised on the Lowrie farm of RR 1 Campbellville, Jean is well known in the district. She won her recognition for activities as a volunteer in three services in the city.

20 years ago

May 7, 1964

Carl Weir, 16, has been chosen as the High School student to attend the Rotary sponsored Adventure in Citizenship in Ottawa this spring.

The St. John Ambulance council is proud to announce that Brenda Gail Fryer has won the Cadet of the Year award for her general proficiency in the No. 417 Acton Combined Division.

Jim Ralston was named the first president of the new Senior Citizen club at the organizational meeting in the YMCA Thursday night. Vice president is Bob O'Hara, secretary Mrs. Donald Reid and treasurer Miss Annie Aitken.

Stewart Malcolm, an employee with Beardmore and Co. Ltd., for the past 53 years retired officially Thursday and appreciation of his valued service was shown by the company as he was presented with a return plane ticket to his native land—Scotland.

50 years ago

May 3, 1934

In the class of 23 students of the Ontario Veterinary College who will receive their degree tonight at Simcoe Hall, University of Toronto, is Mr. E.N. Harrop, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Harrop, Bower Ave., Acton. This young man stood fifth in the class and also won the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps prize.

Plans were discussed for fitting observation of the 21st Acton Fall Fair to be held at Acton this fall. It is coming of age year and special attractions will be made.

Mrs. J.W. Barbere, Mrs. J.H. Reed, Mrs. C.L. Poole and Miss E. Hawthorne attended the Women's Missionary Society's convention in Waterdown on Tuesday.

Mr. W.H. Speight and Mrs. Fred Adsett of Toronto visited with Mrs. H.P. Moore and other Acton relatives.

75 years ago

May 6, 1909

Citizens on Mill St. complain that half a score of men, some married and some single, made night hideous with their drunken orgies and foul and profane language last Friday night. This disgraceful conduct was kept up until midnight, it is reported, but there was evidently no effort on the part of the police officers to keep the peace.

Father Arnold is having St. Joseph's parsonage shingled and otherwise improved.

Remember! We had snow storm on the first of May this year. The postponed vestry meeting of St. Alban's Church was held on Wednesday, 19th April. Rev. R.F. Kelleman, rector presiding.

100 years ago

May 8, 1884

The residence of the late Mrs. George Walter on Bower Avenue together with the household furnishings, etc., will be sold by public auction at the premises on Saturday, 17th inst. at 2 p.m.

From the Bible Society Recorder we learn that the contributions of Acton Branch Bible Society for last year amounted to \$107.

Mr. A.W. Green now sports one of the neatest rigs in town. His new phaeton is quite attractive. A.W. takes about as much pleasure out of a good horse and carriage as anyone we know.

Mr. J. Fyfe is adding to his splendid residence on Church St. a neat and becoming portico and balcony.

Take in Grease this weekend

Grease.

Judging by our sneak previews while taking promotion photos, the student actors and actresses have come up with another winner.

So, try a little home town entertainment Thursday, Friday or Saturday night. You won't be going out for your usual fare at the local schools, but something really exceptional.

Thanks for publicity

Dear Sir,

The busy months, of February and March are now over and on behalf of the Canadian Heart Fund, Ontario Division, may I express our gratitude for your promotional support before, during the following campaign.

Although all returns are not in yet, we are hopeful our objective for Halton of \$160,000 will be met before our year end in June.

The Medical Committee of the Ontario Heart Foundation has committed \$1.4 million to research in Heart and Stroke Disease

commencing July 1984.

It is only with the year round support of many individuals and businesses that the commitment can be made.

Community awareness of the needs and achievements of the research of the Ontario Heart Foundation has been increased because of your coverage and support. The residents of Acton have contributed \$5300 during this year's campaign.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Farrell
Co-Ordinator, Halton