

# the HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills

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## Understanding, awareness

Almost four years ago Halton Hills was formed from the three municipalities of Acton, Georgetown and Esquesing Township. With that merger came a feeling by some of alienation, loss of identity and a growing resentment toward the new system.

During the past four years, despite what many may believe, the regional system has functioned reasonably well. But it is still too early to make an adequate appraisal of how effective it is until the feelings of resentment begin to die away.

And that seems to be the message contained within a letter from Darcy McKeough, Ontario's treasurer and administrator of regional governments, in reply to a brief delivered by the Acton for Actonians committee.

The greatest asset of the region, he says, is the sincere efforts of citizens and elected officials to make the system run smoothly. Can we as citizens of the three former municipalities really say that we have attempted to make the system run as efficiently as possible? Or have old attitudes fostered a lingering resistance to making the new system work the way it should for all of us?

While Mr. McKeough says the province has no manpower or financial resources to institute a review of Halton's regional government, that review will take place — indeed it is taking place now, hopefully in an objective manner by local politicians who are acutely aware of the failings of the new system, and also those failings of the former county system.

Mr. McKeough says this municipality has experienced growing pains during the past four years. His description is accurate since each of us have at some time experienced the same growing pains when error in judgment became a learning experience for future maturity. He seems to say, in essence that we as the municipality called Halton Hills (and Halton Region also) are reaching that maturity where decisions which affect all of us are being made with benefit of the sometimes questioned decisions made during the first years of regional government.

His call to work together could come at no better time for Halton Hills citizens to foster an awareness and understanding of regional government. It is time we forged a new identity as that community which has almost two-thirds of the land area known as North Halton and almost 25 per cent of the land area known as Halton Region.

Acton must play an important role in the future of Halton Hills by helping to forge this new identity.



## Avoid becoming a victim of the Christmastime blues

By GERRY LANDSHOROUGH

Are you a Christmas "victim" — a worn out frazzled leftover, hardly able to face yourself let alone the New Year? People do become victimized at Christmas time and often the victims don't recognize themselves until it's too late.

Although Christmas is traditionally the happiest and most joyful time of year it is also a highly commercialized time of year where we are constantly bombarded from Halloween on to "buy" and be caught up in the land of "gimme, gimme."

You can avoid this type of hassle at your house by eliminating anything that you really don't want to do. Christmas will come without your special Christmas cake that takes 38 days of sheer effort and painstaking work to prepare.

Christmas will come if you sit back with dark glasses and trench coat and do nothing at all. Christmas is Dec. 25 and it will arrive as did Sept. 25, Oct. 25 and Nov. 25.

The point here is to plan your holiday according to what your family really requires for your own particular manner of celebrating the holiday season. Most husbands and children I know would prefer a non-grocery wife and mother and they would gladly share the chores or do away with some of them in order to achieve this.

Make this year a share the workload Christmas.

Over the years I have watched women especially, work themselves into a frenzy baking, re-decorating, running from store to store like chickens without heads, trying to buy something for everyone — and to behold the magic day arrives and they are too tired and irritable to take part in the festivities.

Christmas becomes something resembling a big pain in the neck and they just can't wait until it's over. Super career girls, super moms, and superhomemakers, all jockey for the number one position on the Christmas casualty list.

But overly conscientious wives and homemakers are not the only victims of Christmas time. Children are often led to believe that they will receive more than

Santa can deliver and Christmas morning becomes a great disappointment.

The biggest is not necessarily the best, toys that frustrate little hands when they can't pull the strings or push a complicated series of buttons as easily as seen on TV should be bought very carefully.

For little children Christmas time can be an eternity of waiting. Keep the fanfare at a level your youngsters can cope with. Try to keep everything as low key as possible till a week or so before the big day. Over wound youngsters are not only victims of Christmas time but they can victimize an entire household with whining, crying and fighting.

Husbands and fathers are also caught up in anything but a Christmas spirit. The family home does not have to compete with the Las Vegas strip for lights even if art and crafty old Freddy, the next door neighbour has just put a complete North Pole scene with moving Santa and reindeers. Fathers don't have to put up lights — not if they don't want to.

More victims — grandparents are often caught in the clutches of Christmas madness and melancholy. Grandparents often try

to buy for their grandchildren what they could never afford for their own family. Guilt often plays a star role at Christmastime. Then poor grandma and grandpa are let down with a bang when junior doesn't even seem to notice his elaborate "whats-it". Junior often can't even work it, and it sits under the tree being useless and then it moved to the bedroom shelf to be useless. Grandparents should never be embarrassed to ask what a toy does or how it works.

Entertain only those you wish to be near — open house sounds good but often it becomes nothing more than a great pain — at your expense. Jumping on the party circuit can also be a great pain. It results in upset stomachs and gigantic hangovers. Make this your Christmas to decide if it really worth it to you.

Christmas cannot be the happy joyous occasion that we are told it is without planning and eliminating. This year eliminate anything that makes you a "Christmas victim" and plan a happy holiday early. You just might find that the simpler things are kept, the happier everyone will be.

## Sunset law legislation deserves a close look

By DON O'HEARN  
 Queen's Park Bureau  
 Of The Herald

One of the more interesting legislative proposals before the current session is that we should have a "sunset law."

The point of sunset laws is that there should be watchdogs over the proliferation of government commissions and agencies that we have today.

Actually there have been two proposals before the House.

One by Opposition Leader Stuart Smith. And the second put forward by the able young PC lawyer from London South, Gordon Walker.

There can be little real question of the need for some form of such agency in a government of the size of Ontario's today.

A figure generally used is that there are under the government about 350 government agencies, boards and commissions.

Incredible as this may seem it is probably a true figure.

And not only are many of them largely uncontrolled except by the ministries to which they report. There probably are a few

which even the ministries may have forgotten about.

TWO APPROACHES

Apparently Smith and Walker have two different approaches in mind as to how their sunset controls would work.

Smith apparently would have the various boards, etc., come before a committee of the House at intervals of every three or four years. The committees then would review the spending and reason for existence.

The London South member would take a tougher approach.

He would have the committees and board appear and justify themselves.

If they couldn't make a case it would be sunset. They would be out of business.

Which would be the better method isn't easy to say.

Walker argues that the Smith approach would be cumbersome and would involve interminable days of sittings and dealing with bureaucracy.

On the other hand his quite well might be too arbitrary.

It might be prone to be too much sunset and not enough sunlight.

However, whatever the end result, it seems that eventually we will see some action — and that's a good thing.

## Man can adapt

The Club of Rome, and closer to home, the prestigious Club of Guelph, are "think tank" groups of concerned people who concentrate on world problems.

Two of the major concerns, incidentally, are listed in an accompanying editorial from NEA. They are the "doomsday" clock which measures how close scientists think we are to global holocaust and a similar time — piece ticking off the fact we have three new human beings born every second.

The groups it has seemed to us, do an outstanding job in focusing attention on future possibilities. But the emphasis always seems to be on pessimism. The scientists are judging the outcome of future problems in the light of today's circumstances.

An oil shortage, for example, was inevitable from the first day man tapped a well. Past generations have had to overcome, in their time, shortages of animals to hunt, fur to wear and timber to cut.

Man adapted. Homo sapiens has always exhibited a brilliant capacity for change to win the fight for survival. Virtually unnoticed, a classic case of adaptability has been experienced in North America this year and it could be a study for the Club of Guelph.

Remember all the predictions last winter of dire disaster in California which had experienced the most severe drought in the state's history? Pundits said the state would shrivel, crops fail, earth cracks open up, etc.

The Californians adapted to the situation. Old wells were reactivated and new ones

sunk. Irrigation methods were changed to make sure water wasn't wasted. Water was taken to individual trees instead of being wasted in sprays.

Mandatory 10 per cent cuts in water use resulted in Californians actually cutting use by more than double that limit. Conservation was so successful, in fact, that water utilities are complaining about losing too much revenue.

Instead of losing crops because of the drought the Californian farmers brought in harvests of fruit and vegetables equaling or even exceeding the 1976 harvests. Their income was down, because of higher water and energy costs, but the crops were bountiful as the farmers adopted new cropping and irrigation patterns.

Drought experts are still cautioning that things could be had in 1978 if California experiences a second successive dry winter. But the hard fact is that human beings again proved how resilient they are when they are faced with an honest-to-goodness crisis.

Our ancestors became farmers instead of hunters. They invented cloth when fur became short. They switched to metal when they denuded the forests. And we've lived for 25 years now as the thermonuclear time clock has kept ticking away a few notches from midnight. In terms of historical time man is a newcomer on earth compared to the cockroach or the rat but he's every bit as wily, and tough when it comes to adapting. Guelph Mercury.

## Looking through our files

**THIRTY YEARS AGO**  
 Higher taxes, not only next year, but for many years to come, will be the case in Georgetown from now on, if one interprets correctly the several speeches made by nominees at the municipal nomination meeting Friday in the public library. Mayor Joseph Gibbons pointed particularly to sewage and said that it will lead to a general rate increase of approximately 10 mills, plus an 11 cent-per-foot frontage charge for twenty years under the Local Improvement Act.

**TWENTY YEARS AGO**  
 Coun. Ern Hyde took strong objection at Monday's council meeting to a motion passed at the previous week's council meeting giving approval "in principle" to a proposal of North Halton Builders Association that more residential building land be released in Delrex, with the association promising to promote industrial and commercial growth by putting part of their profits into a stock company for this purpose.

**TEN YEARS AGO**  
 A proposal which would add over 10,000 residents to Georgetown, three more elementary schools and a high school, 1,420 homes and a number of apartments, is being studied

by Georgetown council

Bramac, which purchased most of the Delrex Developments land last year on which many homes have already been built in the east end, now proposes large scale development on the former Cleve, Hepburn and Wright farms between Silver Creek and Main Street South.

Bramac has asked the town to construct the necessary sanitary sewer and water mains and to pave Mountainview Road to the south town limits. It asks a guarantee that water and sewage disposal facilities will be adequate to serve the new area. And necessary amendments to the town's official plan and zoning by-law would be required.

In return, it has offered to pay the town \$500,000 in cash and ownership of the Delrex office building and a surrounding 4-acre property which it values at \$200,000 and to provide four school sites in the new town area at no cost to the town.

The proposal involves 362 acres. Of this, 311 acres are earmarked as residential. There would be 1,420 single lot and 20 acres of apartments and multiples. The remaining land would be six acres commercial, 27 institutional, and 18 acres of parkland.

## Editor's notebook

The only way to have a friend is to be one.  
 Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Chretien crashes party, as PQ spouts glories

By STEWART MACLEOD  
 Ottawa Bureau  
 Of The Herald

It's quite obvious that Premier René Levesque didn't invite federal Finance Minister Jean Chretien to Quebec City to celebrate the first anniversary of the Parti Quebecois' election to power. There would have been a much better party without him.

But Chretien went there anyway — specifically to speak to the Quebec Chamber of Commerce — and as Levesque was holding forth to various reporters on the glories of independence and the failings of federalism, the federal minister was, in effect, picketing the party.

Secession means economic disaster, was the theme of his talk. And he said that even the mere threat of secession by Quebec is playing havoc with its economy. The only way stability can be restored, he suggested, is for an immediate referendum that will clearly indicate Quebecers are firmly committed to federalism.

Across the street, Premier Levesque was giving reporters a different version. "There's a clearer and clearer perception among many citizens, if not most of them, that the government that is chiefly responsible for the economic situation is the central government, which has controls over tariffs, money, the big budget."

Chretien obviously didn't agree. "It would not be honest to attribute to the separatist government the whole responsibility for the economic problems of Quebec," said the finance minister. "But it would not be honest either, to pretend that the deterioration of the economic situation in Quebec has nothing to do with the election of a separatist government."

**MORE COMING**

Until the Quebec government gets around to holding its long-awaited referendum on independence — likely in the spring of 1979 — we are going to hear many contradictory

arguments about the economic impact of separation. This seems to be main line of attack as both the separatist and federal forces prepare for the main bout in the battle for the allegiance of Quebecers.

The first year was devoted largely to establishing a Parti Quebecois broadhead amid the temporary ruins of the provincial Liberal Party, and a shellshocked federal Liberal Party. But, going into the second year of a PQ regime, the provincial Liberals are rebuilding toward a leadership convention, and the federal Liberals are taking off the gloves in the fight for Confederation.

And with economics in the forefront, the trench warfare will be headed by Chretien, an appealing down-to-earth orator whose over-riding purpose is to convince Quebecers that prosperity and stability are synonymous with federalism. On the other side, Levesque is trying to convince his people that the current economic difficulties are due largely to federal policies and that

prosperity will come to Quebec only when there is a new "partnership" with Canada.

He doesn't use the word "interdependence" much anymore. The words "partnership" and "association" apparently have more appeal in Quebec and all the first anniversary interviews featured these definitions.

Successive public opinion polls have indicated that a vast majority of Quebecers are opposed to "interdependence."

**CLAIMS OPTIMISM**

But in order to even gather majority support for a new constitutional arrangement short of independence, the Levesque government must convince the population that the province would benefit from such a change. And he claims to be optimistic.

"More and more Quebecers are coming to realize that the main responsibility for the economy rests in Ottawa," he says.

With unemployment in the province already over 11 per cent and expected to rise to 14 per cent during the winter, it would be

convenient if Levesque could lay all the blame at Ottawa's doorstep. But Chretien and his troops won't accept it. Hence his tough-talking foray into Quebec during the PQ birthday celebrations.

The province is losing its population at three times the normal rate, he warned. Unemployment is rising faster in Quebec than in most regions of Canada. Private investment is down. Corporations are "fleeing" Quebec.

"I accept that the political status of Quebec is being questioned," he said. "But we must all recognize that if the issue is prolonged, it will bring in its train mounting economic costs."

We may well get used to it because the battle lines have been formed and we are going to hear these arguments repeated endlessly during the next 18 months.

## Developers are not cause of house costs

Interesting reading can be made of a recent report released by the Ontario Economic Council on the effect of monopoly interests in the Toronto market area housing boom during the early 1970s.

The report, prepared by two professors of economics at the University of Western Ontario was the first attempt at examining the "concentration and the existence of power to unduly influence the market."

It makes a strong case for government to review its policies in three major areas: subsidizing purchasing power of lower income buyers a review of the land speculation tax introduced to prevent speculation on marketable land; and a review of confusing standards for judging subdivision applications.

Authors James Markusen and David Scheffman contend that these three policy areas — with some others well — have contributed greatly to the cost of homeownership during the past few years.

Their report also says that developers have been falsely blamed for the cost increases, and they attach the blame on local municipalities which are holding back unserviced land for development.

Other areas influencing price rises include: general inflation, rapidly rising incomes, liberal mortgage financing, and demographic factors.

"The report states that the land price surge was caused by unforeseen increases in demand and aggravated by a shortage of trunk servicing capacity (especially sewers) and unwillingness on the part of some municipalities to grant subdivision approvals," an extract from a report contained in a recent issue of Housing Ontario states.

The OEC report also states: "Any policy which does not lower the demand for housing or increase the supply will not reduce the price of housing. Policies such as the home buyer's grants increase the demand for housing and so increase the price of housing."

The authors also believe that while the initial impact of the land speculation tax was of benefit, driving the speculator from the marketplace and selling land to developers, the cost was eventually passed onto the consumer.

But there is a concern in application of this tax and that is that a concentration of power could result for developers and affect the rate of development causing little tax to be generated.

The market has not reached that stage however, and the study by the professors concludes that Toronto was not unique from the rest of the country during the period when prices rose quickly.

The report also concludes that "Toronto real estate is not controlled by a few large developers and that ownership concentration is too low to imply market power even if all companies with overlapping corporate control are treated as a single firm."

They state, however, that concentration can be effectively thwarted by land registration and approval requirements.

And there you have the case for the developers as seen by an unbiased research institute. Copies are available from the Ontario government bookstore on Bay Street at a cost of \$10 per copy.

If the conclusions are reached in this report are correct, then we should be urging provincial and federal governments to review the entire development process to provide for a system where prices can be held moderately in line with the ability of the community to provide demand.

It is something to think about.

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