

Escarpment commission backing off

What's happened to the Niagara Escarpment Commission's backbone?

Based on recent activities and statements from commission members, it would seem they have lost it.

The first overwhelming indication that NEC was destined to shun controversy, even at the expense of not fulfilling their mandate came just after the preliminary plan (as opposed to proposed plan) came out and, following protests, the escarpment control area reduced by a whopping 60 per cent.

Since that time the NEC has backed down on a number of decisions relating to escarpment land use. Certainly the tone often expressed by commissioners at their meetings is not one of dynamic defenders of the escarpment.

And then last week, as if to prove thoughts the NEC is on the retreat, commission chairman Ivor McMullin explained his reasons for not doing something because "I can see getting a lot of criticism."

Mr. McMullin was giving this as his reason to suggest the NEC not make a recommendation on which level of government should have escarpment development control once the final plan is completed.

If Mr. McMullin does not feel that he and the other commission members are capable enough, after years of studying the Niagara Escarpment, to make a recommendation on this important issue, it's no wonder much of the public have lost faith in the body.

Under the provincial legislation establishing the NEC, the province will decide whether the municipalities or the commission will be responsible for land use jurisdiction. Of course, a recommendation from the NEC

supposed experts on the issue would be expected and seriously considered by the government.

The NEC staff has recently recommended land use jurisdiction be handed over to the municipalities once the commission's final report is completed.

For NEC chairman McMullin to advocate the commission abstain from making a recommendation on the controversial matter, because there might be criticism lacks backbone; Mr. McMullin's suggestion that the commission take no stand also leaves the staff's recommendation as the only NEC statement related to land use jurisdiction. It would therefore seem imperative that the NEC either endorse or reject the staff recommendation, otherwise it appears they are giving it passive support.

Just as planning boards, conservation authorities and the like all are centers of controversy the NEC must also expect to find itself right on the hotseat. If the Niagara Escarpment Commission did not attract controversy, it wouldn't need to exist. If people along the escarpment control area voluntarily ensured the land mass preservation, NEC would be needless.

As it is, the NEC is very much needed and it's needed to take a strong, leadership role in developing and maintaining a policy to preserve the Niagara Escarpment. In this role it is very likely the NEC will indeed arouse Mr. McMullin's dreaded criticism.

In terms of future jurisdiction of escarpment land use, it would make sense that a NEC made up of members truly representing area municipalities would be the best to administer the plan. This body would have the best sense of overview for the escarpment but would also be aware of local problems and needs because of the area municipality representatives.

New tax changes should be gradual

It would be totally irresponsible for the Ontario provincial government to bring in a new assessment formula that would see Halton Hills' rate of payment for regional services jump by a whopping 13 per cent, in one fell swoop.

Apparently, both Halton Hills and Milton have been under-assessed by the provincial government for their share of Halton region's costs for education, regional government. At the same time the government says that Burlington has been over-assessed. Unfortunately they seem to be

considering righting this wrong in one shot, in the upcoming taxation year.

Halton Hills treasurer estimates the new assessment process could cost the town almost \$1 million in the first year it's brought into effect. This would be a staggering blow to the plans of the town council and, to the taxpayers who would have to help make up the increased costs or suffer through reduced services.

It's totally unreasonable for the provincial government to even consider righting the assessment wrong that has existed during the past few years in one shot. Halton Hills council must make it clear to the province the proposed assessment change would have a crippling effect on the municipality.

Mayor Pete Pomeroy has pledged to arrange a meeting with representatives of the province to try and convince them of the devastating nature of the assessment changes.

He could propose that the new assessment levels be phased in, very gradually over a period of years to allow the town to carefully adjust to the fiscal blow. The province could also offer grants to help offset the effect of the increased assessment. By doing this the unfairness of the assessment levels to the southern municipalities would be corrected but, Halton Hills would still be able to maintain levels of service without any drastic moves.

The councillors who seem to be accepting the new assessment have the wrong idea, the new plan corrects a past wrong too abruptly and must be fought. This council cannot simply accept this potentially devastating more as a fait accompli.



Although government is new old mispending still exists



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau
Of The Herald

Just because a new government has come to power since we last paused to ponder the wondrous way in which our money is spent, we are happy to report that nothing changed. Our bureaucratic ingenuity for pinpointing peculiar objects obviously transcends all electoral disruptions.

In our last glance at cash outflow, we were clearly impressed with two contracts, totalling \$151,000, which would produce additional information "in connection with the dynamic interaction between a railway train and its tracks." There was also another contract to produce a "night oil slick finder", not to mention that \$2,500 contract for an "analysis of winter habitat used by moose."

Well, in the latest batch of outside contracts, the one that first caught my eye - and the one that proves our spending ingenuity is undiluted - gives a suburban Ottawa firm \$218,000 to conduct "slamming experiments on warship hulls."

Quite apart from the fact there isn't a warship hull within missile range of suburban Ottawa, I am not clear on why these hulls should be slammed anyway. Might be better to patch them up and see if we can get another year out of them.

OUTDO THEMSELVES

In our last examination of these contracts, I thought our bureaucrats had gone as far as they could with insects, awarding a \$103,000 project for a "feasibility analysis of the proposed Canada biting fly centre." But I underrated their persistence. They are back this time with a \$35,000 contract for the "preparation of illustrations for a manual of Canadian wolf spiders."

Just what we need.

Another one that appeals to me is an \$11,000 contract awarded to a Saskatoon man for "the design, development and implementation of management trainee courses covering wheat farming in Tanzania." If the Tanzanians get tired of growing wheat, perhaps we can interest them in a correspondence course on hull slamming.

I see that a Vancouver firm has picked up an \$11,000 contract for the "thermophilic conversion of wood waste into animal feed" while a Fredericton company gets a \$38,000 contract for the "development of a process for the conversion of cull potatoes and potato waste into liquid molasses". Before all this money is spent, it might be an idea to feed the potatoes to the animals and see whether

we can get molasses out of wood.

Actually, I wasn't aware we needed to find an alternate source of molasses. Solar energy, yes, but not molasses.

QUIETER CHIPPERS

Why the government would spend \$5,000 for the "procurement of a floppy disc system" beats me, but that is mere chicken-feed compared with the \$139,000 being spent for the "development of non-destructive testing techniques for ceramics." That, in turn, is more chicken-feed, compared with the \$480,000 for an "investigation of noise control techniques for wood chippers". That kind of money would buy a good many car mufflers.

When it comes to pure scientific projects, it's very difficult to know whether we are getting good value for our money. For all I know, that \$10,000 contract for an "investigation of impulsive micropulsation activity associated with substorms in the midlatitude sector" might be the bargain of a lifetime.

And considering the fact that, a few months ago, the government spent \$38,000 for a study into the behavior of whelping harp seals in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it's amazing that we now are getting "a seabird atlas of British Columbia" for a mere \$250. But then there never has been any consistency in these spending projects - as we learned early this year when it was revealed that \$410,000 was being spent on the "development of an analysis system for the detection of trace pollutants in exhaled breath."

Our Queen's Park columnist speculates on cabinet shuffle



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau
Of The Herald

TORONTO — Choosing a provincial cabinet isn't easy.

A premier, in our case Bill Davis, has to weigh a large number of factors.

First Davis has to assume the person selected is competent enough to do the job, something that is usually determined by first testing him or her with committee assignments or as a parliamentary assistant.

Next there is the question of image. Does appointment of the person appeal to or appease some voters, for reasons of geography (once very important in Ontario), religion (also very important once), ideology, or otherwise?

Will the minister look good in the House when he or she has to handle opposition members who spend their time seeking out every chink in the government armor?

Does the new minister, or the transfer of an old one, aid towards the total team image that Davis likes to project?

MAIN AIM

Then too the person sought must want the job.

There are also political debts to be paid off.

And although it isn't traditional in Ontario cabinets, the premier might appoint someone because his or her ideas are valued when cabinet decisions are made.

All of this, of course, adds up to Davis' basic goal of keeping the government out of trouble.

Which is why the cabinet shuffle that Davis will likely make in August is becoming an increasing topic of conversation around Queen's Park.

And much of the scuttlebutt centres around Frank Drea, the pugnacious crusader for the small man who is now consumer and commercial relations minister.

TWO CHOICES

It's doubtful Davis intends to go for a major shuffle this summer, shifting ministers all over the place in an attempt to put an entirely new face on his government.

That might be a good policy prior to next year's (likely) election, but not now. Most ministers are handling their portfolios quite well.

But even so there's plenty of room for changes.

Two cabinet posts are in essence empty, being held temporarily by other ministers. That's the energy and solicitor-general portfolios.

The talk at Queen's Park is that Drea will get energy.

OTHER VIEW

Drea didn't like that trial balloon, since he is quite happy in consumer and commercial relations. But the possibility is there.

Davis wants an energy minister who is high-profile, is tough yet resilient, a good salesman and capable of handling one of the more complex subjects government must deal with.

Actually Drea would likely die of boredom in a job that is highly technical, is not people-oriented, and gives a little vent to Drea's crusading talents (unless he can bash the oil companies).

A more interesting idea would see Drea moved to environment, which while not a disaster zone under Harry Parrott in the last session, was one of the government's weaker links.

It would certainly fit in with Drea's talents. And it might restore declining public confidence in the government's ability to handle environmental issues.

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to the
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Halton's History

From our files

LIQUOR STORE OPENS

THIRTY YEARS AGO — Georgetown's new liquor store will be located in the Hewson building on Mill Street. A lease has been signed by the Liquor Control Board with Tom Hewson for the rental of a portion of his building which houses his farm machinery and car business and Real Estate Office.

Rev. A.L. Howard, former minister of Knox and Limehouse Presbyterian Churches, was elected mayor of Meaford in a by-election Monday. The office became vacant when the former mayor resigned after a dispute with the local Canadian Legion branch concerning arrangements for the visit of the Governor-General to Meaford.

Jack Brill has brought a men's clothing store in the Toronto suburb of Lansing and will open for business on September 1. Jack is the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Brill, who now make their home in Toronto. His father was a veteran Georgetown merchant until his retirement a few years ago when he sold his clothing store to Jack Cotton. The store is still operated under the Brill name.

CAMPERS ESCAPE QUAKE

TWENTY YEARS AGO — A local woman's sister flipped a coin somewhere in Yellowstone National Park last Monday morning not knowing that she was gambling on escape from a possible horrible death for herself and her family. Mrs. John Strang who is the sister of Mrs. John Mathies, 5 Orchard Boulevard, her husband and four children of Birmingham, Michigan, were faced with the decision of shifting their campsite further up the Madison River to the Heben Dam, or heading for home. The fall of the coin luckily favoured the latter, for they were just outside the area enroute for home when the violent earthquake believed to have been the worst in the history of the States, hit the park, bringing mountainsides down on campers in the area of the park they considered visiting.

An oddity in the plant world is reported by Reg Williams, Stewarttown, who has a sunflower plant which produced twelve blooms at the same time on one stalk. The plant, says Mr. Williams, had flowers blooming all up the same stem, contrary to the usual sunflower bloom, which appears only at the top.

A local woman, Mrs. Emily Hicken, shook the pillars of the Loblaw's Groceries organization recently and their secretly planned "green stamps" venture almost came tumbling down. Mrs. Hicken created the anxious moment when she walked into the local branch of Loblaw's and confronted them with a book of Loblaw's green stamps days before the "Surprise offer" was supposed to be unveiled. Management were relieved, however, when on reading the printing on the stamps they discovered them to be issued in 1912 by T.P. Loblaw's store-for-runners of the present Loblaw's company and long forgotten in the past 47 years.

BLAZE DESTROYS BARN

TEN YEARS AGO — A fierce blaze destroyed a barn filled to the roof with hay, straw and grain, Sunday afternoon and sent a fireman to the hospital with heat prostration. Fireman Brian Fife was taken to Georgetown Hospital, when he was overcome by the intense heat. The hogs and calves in the barn were saved before the fire really got underway.

A bridge on the 5th Line of Esquesing south of 5 Sideroad was washed out when the second unusually heavy rain in less than a month fell on the area Saturday afternoon. The road is now closed and the bridge will have to be replaced.

The six Sykes, Bill, Ernie, Ray, Philip, Karen, and Leslie, and another Georgetown youth, Brent Barkhouse, were a big hit at the CNE bandshell Tuesday morning, where they sang and played five numbers. All arranging was done by 17-year-old Phil, who also composed one of the songs, "I'm wondering". Needless to say, parents Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Sykes were in the audience.

Baton-twirling Cathy Danylichuk, 26 Heather Court, returned home in triumph Sunday after the 4-girl team of which she is a member, won the North American Championship in Syracuse, New York, the day before, competing against teams from all over the United States. It is the first time in the 22-year history of the event that a Canadian team has won the championship.

"The only dangerous part of flying is driving your car to the airport," observes housewife Mrs. Thomas Brotherton of Limehouse. She should know. A veteran pilot of ten years standing, she has flown across North America many times, has 450 hours flying and recently took part in the 23rd annual Powder Puff Derby. The derby, officially known as All Women's Transcontinental Air Race, started in San Diego on July 4, and wound up four days and 2,515 miles later in Washington D.C.

WATER RATES DEBATE

ONE YEAR AGO — Halton regional council has for the third time declined to adopt a policy of uniform water rates for all four member municipalities that would have saved Acton taxpayers from a substantial rate increase next year, despite strong appeals from regional chairman Ric Morrow, Halton Hills Mayor Tom Hill and Acton councillor Pat McKenzie, council endorsed a public works committee recommendation rejecting uniform rates by a vote of 15-7.

Halton regional chairman Ric Morrow, 37, has announced that he will retire from public life, at least temporarily, following his current term in office. His decision to end a ten-year political career is based upon family and business concerns.

Strong condemnations of Halton region's apparent intention to control agricultural land use has helped convince regional planning committee chairman Pat McLaughlin that more time is needed to review Halton's first official plan before it is adopted by regional council and sent to the ministry of housing for final approval.

Halton Hills council has decided to ask the provincial government to pay portion of the \$900,000 start-up grant being offered to Halton region for the implementation of uniform water rates. The resolution is aimed at getting a portion of the total grant for Halton Hills so that residents of Georgetown and Acton will not have to face the substantial tax increase anticipated as a result of extensive improvements made to the Halton Hills' water systems during the past year.

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