

Bovis homeowners confront council

High taxes creating 'ghost town' - resident

Allegedly excessive taxes paid by homeowners in newer sections of Acton was the main point of interest among residents at a public meeting following the special town council meeting at Acton High School Monday evening.

Larry Greaves, chairman of the Acton Business Improvement Area Board, explained that the meeting had been arranged to give residents a chance to find out how the town's taxes are used and to direct specific questions at staff members on hand for the meeting.

Bill Johnson, a resident of Rosemary Road in Acton's Bovis subdivision, said that in the six years since he moved to his home, his taxes have increased so much that the increase alone is more than some residents in other parts of town pay as their total tax bill.

He and most of the other 60 people in attendance pay inordinately high taxes, Mr. Johnson said. Most of them are Bovis residents who share his view that they're "getting the shaft" from the town on taxes. The residents sought an explanation of why council is "stalling" a move to implement Section 86 of the Assessment Act involving equalized assessments.

"We didn't come to see a report on how our taxes are spent and gathered," Mr. Johnson said. "We're looking for answers on when something will be done about our taxes."

Rick Smith, another Rosemary Road resident, concurred with Mr. Johnson that taxes in the Bovis subdivision are out of line. He warned council that if taxes keep climbing without relief, no new industry will locate here to help offset residential taxes, gas prices will keep rising so that transportation becomes increasing-

ly expensive, and Acton will become a "ghost town".

Residents complained that council is moving too slowly in seeking further information via a committee on Section 86 and asked whether Georgetown councillors would squish any requests for implementation, since it appears to be in Georgetown's best interest to maintain the status quo, while Acton suffers under unequal taxation.

Coun. Ross Knechtel pointed out that there are "too many unknowns" involved with the new system for council to adopt it blindly. He particularly wants to know what effect the redistribution of taxes

would have on attracting new industry and commerce to the town.

Industry is what the town needs to relieve residential tax-payers of some of their burden, Coun. Knechtel said, but until council knows more about Section 86, it won't seek it out.

Residents were equally unhappy to find that figures couldn't be broken down to show what portion of costs for a service apply to Acton as opposed to what portion belongs to Georgetown.

James Morris of Cobblehill Road said he felt Acton is getting the short end of the stick in such things as recrea-

tion. While Acton has one arena and Georgetown has only two, the new, modern arena is in Georgetown and Acton residents put up with a less efficient building, which Mr. Morris believes cannot do the job well.

Town treasurer Ray King told Mr. Morris that while such things as the cost of maintaining Georgetown's arenas might be separated from the budget and compared with similar figures for Acton, there is no way to break down how much of the recreation director's salary should be applied to his efforts on Acton's behalf, as compared with his work for Georgetown.

Grant criteria change

Government aid available to BIAs

By MAGGIE HANNAH
 Herald Staff Writer

Halton Hills will be able to take advantage of government aid to spruce up its shopping areas, thanks to a change in criteria governing the Main Street revitalization program.

The announcement, at the Ontario Renewal Convention in Toronto last week by Ontario housing minister Claude Bennett, that the population ceiling had been raised to 35,000 from 30,000 in the Main Street program means that Halton Hills will now fit the provincial criteria and qualify for a low-cost provincial loan to beautify her downtowns,

says Larry Greaves, chairman of the Acton Business Improvement Area (BIA) committee.

Mr. Greaves says he sees no stipulation in the legislation that precludes the Acton and Georgetown BIAs from sharing a loan to beautify both downtown cores. As he understands it, the government places a \$100,000 maximum on what any town can borrow under the program, but it places no restrictions on how many downtowns this loan can cover. Since Halton Hills is one town but has two urban centres, he sees no reason why the loan can't be split.

Regional government must have created several towns with similar problems of more than one urban centre and too large a population to meet former Main Street program criteria, he suspects. For that reason, it was probably easier to amend the criteria than to make exceptions for all towns caught in the same position as Halton Hills.

Before the BIAS can apply for the program the town must have a minimum maintenance and occupancy bylaw, Mr. Greaves says. He agrees with the theory behind that, since it is "only common sense" if the government is lending a community money to do a face lift, that there be reassurance from the community that things won't be left alone once the job is complete.

PAGEANTRY AND POLISH AT THE HIGHLAND FLING



The pipe major (above) led 20 massed bands on to the field Saturday for the opening ceremonies at the 5th annual Speyside Highland Games. The games' honorary chieftain, CFRB's Henry Shannon was escorted on to the field by an honor guard of members of the 78th Fraser Highlanders, led by Major Donald Campbell, below. They wore uniforms of authentic design from 1757, which cost \$2,000 to re-create today. The day's events included the setting of a Canadian record in a heavy event for the first time at the Speyside games, as well as pipe, dance and drum competitions. The young lady at the left was just one of hundreds of enthusiastic competitors in the games. Proceeds from the games will go towards the pledge of \$2,000 by the games committee to the proposed library-cultural centre.

LOTS MORE PHOTOS ON PAGES B1, C1

Acton homecoming for student voyageurs

A rousing welcome is expected to greet 16 Acton High School students tonight (Wednesday) when they present an audio journal of their just-completed, two-week canoe trip into history for relatives, friends and classmates at the school.

The students, members of Paul Tamblin's total immersion history class, arrived home on the weekend after a 350-kilometre paddle along the Ottawa and Mattawa rivers, tracing the fur-trading routes of the voyageurs of Canada's pioneer history.

Following in the footsteps of ground-breaking explorers like Samuel de Champlain and Pierre Radisson, the students used canoes built as replicas of the voyageurs' 26-foot "canoes de nord" and dressed in period costumes to assume the character of real persons from Upper Canada's history.

Instant macaroni dinner may not have been among the rations of voyageurs who used to canoe from North Bay to Ottawa more than 300

years ago, but the costumed students were glad to have a modern supplement to a diet of pea soup and beans.

The Grade 12 group left North Bay June 3.

"This experience will leave a lasting impression," Dr. Tamblin said. "It's the most important thing I've done in nine years of teaching."

PORTRAYS HURON

"We sometimes think like the historical characters we represent," said Sandra Krusch, portraying a Huron Indian girl. Two adults, Lina Larson and Bill Taylor, helped Dr. Tamblin supervise the group.

The idea was conceived after another group from the school retraced the journey

by John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, from Lake Simcoe to Penetanguishene.

The students raised the funds they needed and Acton's Beardmore tannery donated leather for many of the costumes. They researched the historical characters they represent and hope to earn scholastic credits for the effort.

The original plan was to provide voyageur rations and edible plants but the cost was too high. Many of the students, however, tried eating the tender roots of bull-rushes.

The group travels in two wooden canoes made by Greg Cowan of Brussels, Ont. and extra gear is carried in two aluminum craft.

While some sleep under the canoes in the manner of the voyageurs and others use tents, all are required to copy their forerunners in one respect. They go to bed at sunset and rise with the sun.

Tonight's presentation at Acton high begins at 7:30.

Survey finds tax rate lowest in Nassagaweya

By MAGGIE HANNAH and BOB RUTTER

Residents living in the former township of Nassagaweya last year paid the lowest taxes among three comparable municipalities surveyed in Halton Region and Wellington County recently.

The survey of clerks responsible for administering the three municipalities, Puslinch and Eramosa Townships in Wellington County and Milton in Halton Region, shows a residential ratepayer in Nassagaweya paid \$395.84 for an assessment of \$4,000 compared to \$379.80 in Eramosa and \$878.08 in Puslinch Township.

Nassagaweya residents seeking to opt out of Halton have suggested the former township area join Wellington County.

Working out comparisons between costs in Nassagaweya under regional government and a similar township under county government for 1980 are going to be extremely difficult if not impossible, says Milton treasurer Don Lougheed.

Milton has approved a provincial government regulation that allows use of a factored market value assessment to determine the taxon, he said.

He said his department hasn't time to look for them while they are working on figures to substantiate the town of Milton's stand that it is being over-taxed as part of Halton region.

Section 86 of the Assessment Act allows a municipality to average taxes based on the total market value assessment. This means no more in total taxation for the municipality but adjusts individual tax bills to up or down based on the difference between the new and old assessments.

Puslinch Township has asked for a study of the impact of market value assessment on its taxpayers, a spokesman for the Wellington-Dufferin regional assessment office said Thursday.

Accordingly The Mercury reviewed Milton Township (Nassagaweya) in Halton re-

gion and Eramosa and Puslinch Townships in Wellington County for the 1979 taxation year, the last year in which comparable figures are available.

Puslinch is located to the west of Nassagaweya and Eramosa to the north.

Nassagaweya's population is estimated at 3,500 to 4,000 while Puslinch has 4,480 residents and Eramosa 4,368.

The 1979 general purpose levy, which includes services for roads, fire protection and recreation, was: - Puslinch, \$689,935 based on a mill rate of 46.09; Eramosa, \$318,241 on a mill rate of 69.90; - Milton, \$528,105 on a mill rate of 38.10.

Wellington county levied an additional 32.20 mills or \$233,483 on Puslinch residents, and 29.7 mills on residents of Eramosa while Halton region levied 20.32 mills or \$223,093 on Nassagaweya residents.

Services such as welfare, county or regional roads and regional or county planning are paid through the county and regional levy.

Esqueuing would support region critics, Patterson says

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Halton also pays for the cost of operating a regional police force, a service provided at no cost to Wellington County by the Ontario Provincial Police.

The county and regional school boards, criticized in both Halton and Wellington County for high levels of spending, shows very little difference between taxes paid on similar assessments in Halton and Wellington.

Elementary school levies were \$454,823, or 73.45 mills in Puslinch, \$311,000 or 63.15

mills in Eramosa and \$514,966 or 49.32 mills in Nassagaweya. For secondary school levies Puslinch was charged \$464,223 or 66.97 mills, Eramosa \$303,100 or 57.5 mills compared to \$445,699 or 41.22 mills in

Halton. Puslinch does have its own dump and garbage is picked up in some built-up areas. All township areas are served by volunteer fire departments.

Homeowners 'nuts' to dump range--Shaw

By CHRIS AAGAARD
 Herald Staff Writer

Nor-Shaw Developments Ltd. of Etobicoke has scuttled plans to build a golf driving range at the corner of Steeles and Trafalgar Road, town council learned Monday night.

In a June 12 letter to town clerk-administrator Ken Richardson, developer Joe Shaw gave no details as to why his company has withdrawn its application to develop recreational facilities on the land near Harby.

Mr. Shaw told The Herald Tuesday that there are many people opposed to the driving range and the developers "didn't want to be a hassle". Mr. Shaw added that it is not only home owners in the area who are against the facility, but that "a few people went out of their way" to stop the project.

"They're nuts up there," Shaw said. "The driving range would have attracted industry to the (Highway 401-Steeles Avenue industrial corridor)."

Mr. Shaw said that the proposal included an additional eight and a half acres "to make sure we wouldn't be losing any golf balls." He also refuted homeowner complaints that the lights from the driving range would

be annoyingly bright. "The lights would be shut off at 10:30 p.m. and you wouldn't see them from the houses," he said.

Mr. Shaw said the driving range "would not have been a money-making venture" and expressed doubt that Nor-Shaw developers would see one per cent return on the project.

"It was strictly to attract industry," Mr. Shaw said, but the issue "got out of control."

If the driving range project had gone through, Mr. Shaw explained, he would have considered developing the remaining 23 acres of the 41-acre site for year-round recreational use.

"The land is not going to be farmed, I'll tell you that," he said.

Dan Matthews, a spokesman for area residents who were concerned about the proposed driving range, said Monday night that "the proposals scared the hell out of us." Mr. Matthews said he was glad to see the application withdrawn.

Despite the setback, Mr. Shaw said that Nor-Shaw Developments Ltd. still has applications for a plaza and a nursery in the Steeles Avenue area.



CULTURAL CENTRE BIDS \$80,000 OVER BUDGET

Tenders opened last week for the town's proposed library-cultural centre in Georgetown, are all over budget by almost \$80,000, Mayor Peter Pomeroy told The Herald Tuesday.

"We may have put more into the tender than we had originally intended," Mayor Pomeroy said.

Town council is prepared to accept revisions on the original plan of the centre to bring the project within the budget, he added.

"The architect will bring the plan back to the bidders to see what revisions they would make," the mayor said, declining to rule out the possibility of taking the proposal back to council for retendering if a solution is not found.



LOCAL SPORTS' FINEST

The Halton Hills Sports Builder dinner held Monday night, honored Herb Robinson (left) for his contribution to Georgetown athletics and Mark Bray (right), an international class swimmer as the Athlete of the Year. The lovely lady in the centre is pentathlete Debbie Van Kierckebell, guest speaker at the event.

(Herald photo by Mark Clairmont)