

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

Throne speech offers hope for Ontario roads



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Tucked away in the back of the Throne Speech was a welcome five-paragraph reference to roads.

That's right, roads, those asphalt and concrete arteries that (together with rail lines and airports) pump the blood of commerce through this country.

Yet, increasingly over the past two decades, they've been ignored by governments in the pursuit of more sexy political issues.

The Liberal government's Throne Speech promises a change.

Appreciating the "critically important role" that roads play in tourism and other Ontario industry in the getting of products to market on time - the government "will improve and protect Ontario's substantial investment in its transportation network", the speech said.

New links will be built in high-growth areas and funds will be provided for the "rehabilitation" of provincial highways and roads, it promised.

One might suggest it's about time. One might also hold any praise until we see the actual dollar figures for transportation that show up in Treasurer Bob Nixon's budget.

There was some speculation last year that the transportation ministry was going to receive bonus money when, in fact, its budget increase didn't match inflation.

Roads face a problem the opposite of seal pups, schools and hospitals. They aren't warm and cuddly. They don't do obvious good.

They are, in the jargon of the 1960s, "things". And spending money on "people" (health, education, welfare) is the preferred prejudice of our age.

Or, as former Premier Bill Davis said, "cities are for people, not cars" - as if something other than people drive cars.

All that roads do, in fact, is keep our society functioning. Presumably that's a "people" aim.

Roads bring us fresh food from the other side of the continent and deliver many of us to jobs that our ancestors would have considered an inconceivable distance away from where we live.

And yet we're letting them fall apart.

The Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) has some frightening statistics about our neglect.

In the past decade road use has increased dramatically. Car registration is up 27 per cent and truck registration up 51 per cent in the past decade.

Yet in the same period provincial road subsidies have actually fallen behind inflation some \$660 million.

The result has been a continual slippage in the percentage of roads in the province that can be defined as "adequate".

In one municipal group, more than half the roads will be below provincial standards for adequacy in five years or less. Only 54 per cent currently meet that criteria.

And because municipalities and even the province have spent more and more on maintenance and less and less on new construction, a backlog of needs is being built up that OGRA suggests "will be disastrous in the long term".

Just to hold things steady at the municipal level will require an extra \$75 million annually, OGRA says. To bring things back to standard the amount required is closer to \$500 million. In a \$32 billion budget, \$75 million is pocket money, which is why OGRA suggests the smaller amount rather than what is really required.

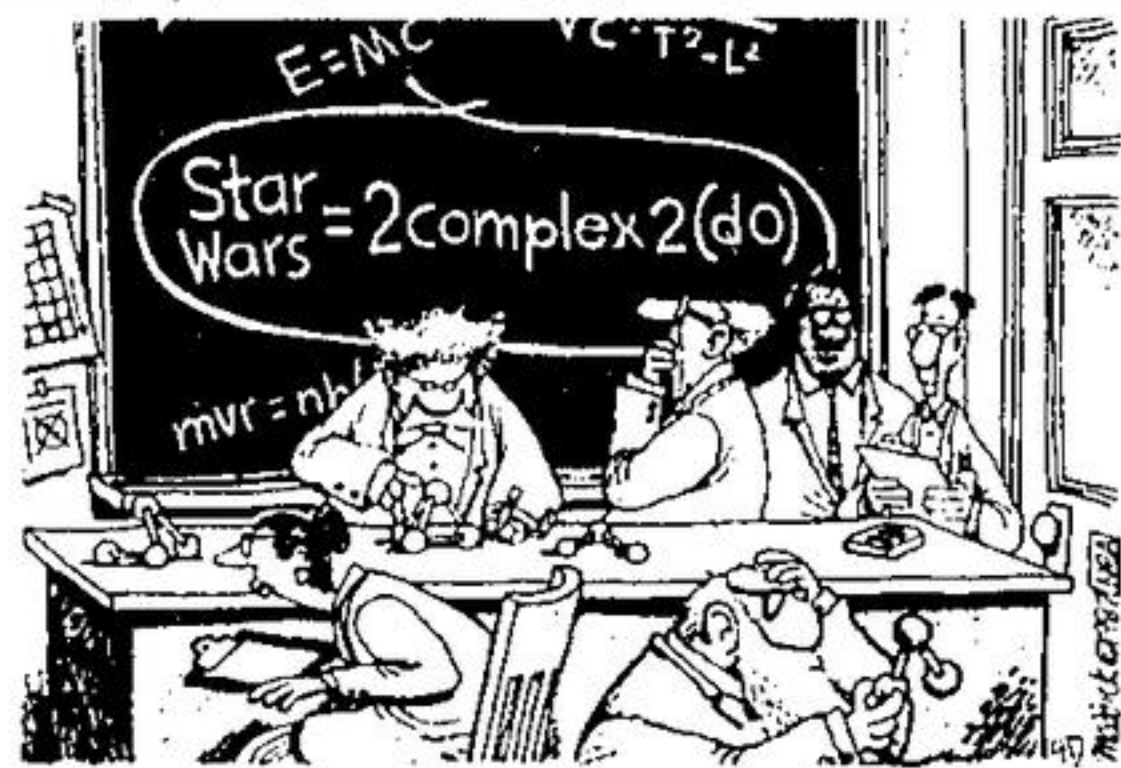
And it notes that every dollar spent on highway construction and rehabilitation results in a further expenditure of more than \$1.50 in the economy.

Poets Corner

OUT OF BALANCE

Never again will life be measured in units of success and failure ups and downs black and white but will go off scale in moments of your time.

—By MARLOWE C. DICKSON, Ritz, Bertou



Hard to ignore historic accord



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Because of the complexities involved - not to mention previous experiences - it would be better to wait a few days before offering any opinions on the constitutional accord reached between Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the 10 provincial premiers.

But how can one ignore such a historic event - the prime minister standing there, and the premiers giving him a standing ovation, as they announced that, for the first time since Confederation, the heads of government hammered together a constitutional accord acceptable to all of them. Not only that, just about every participant said the new accord is even better than they had expected.

One can't ignore it, not when you have every premier in Canada heaping praise on the prime minister and saying we'll all have a far better country as a result of this tentative agreement. And an obviously excited Mr. Mulroney was not about to disagree. "It's a good day for Canada," he said.

"I've never attended a better federal-provincial conference," said Manitoba Premier Howard Pawley. "A historic breakthrough for Quebec as a Canadian partner," said Premier Bourassa.

The other premiers had similar comments. And all were unusually generous in pouring praise on the prime minister for his negotiating skills.

So, you might ask, why shouldn't we all join the praise parade and declare the celebrations officially open? Well, perhaps we should. It's just that constitutional changes, and their potential effects, take some time to sink in - even with the legal experts.

QUESTIONS REMAIN

I recall flying back to Ottawa from Victoria in 1971 after the 11 heads of government had reached an earlier tentative accord. The plane, a charter, was filled with some 150 federal officials, all celebrating the drawing of a new constitutional era in Canada. Prime Minister Trudeau and the 10 premiers - including Robert Bourassa in his earlier incarnation - had finally reached an agreement

on, among other things, a formula for amending the Constitution.

Songs were being composed on the aircraft. "We are marching from Victoria" was one of the better-remembered numbers.

A couple of weeks later, when the Quebec legislature took a closer look at the proposed accord, the whole exercise went up in smoke. And it was 11 years later before Mr. Trudeau and nine premiers were able to reach an agreement. To do so without Quebec, which they did, was always a questionable tactic.

But the deed was done, Canada got its own home-grown Constitution and it was left to Prime Minister Mulroney to complete the family circle, so to speak. He wisely made it a priority objective to get Quebec's signature on the Constitution - a process which now seems well on the road to completion, thanks to this marathon bargaining session.

It was never perceived as an easy process for Mr. Mulroney, a conciliator of some renown. Trying to accommodate one left-out province while other provinces are using the occasion to pry out their own interests is not quite the same as all leaders starting off on the same footing.

The fact that Mr. Mulroney was able to accomplish this says a great deal for his negotiating skills. Let's take nothing away from him in this respect.

UNKNOWNNS REMAIN

On the other hand, let's wait a bit before popping the champagne corks - if for no other reason than to give the experts time to tell us what it all may mean for Canada's future. There are some people, Pierre Trudeau included, who probably wouldn't touch this accord with a bargepole.

As he used to say, "It's easy to reach an agreement if Ottawa is willing to give away the store." And there is no doubt that, in reaching this new accord, Ottawa gave up some powers that Mr. Trudeau held very close to his heart.

Some rather key concessions were granted to the provinces - and Ottawa got nothing in return. "But to talk about giving away the store is absolute foolishness," says Nova Scotia Premier John Buchanan. "What we now have is true equality among all provinces."

Letters

Red Cross World Day

Dear Sirs:

May 8th may already be circled on your calendar as a special day, however we all have good reason to celebrate this date. On May 8, 1928, Henri Dunant was born and later became the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Each year a different theme is chosen to celebrate World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day. This year's selection is the "Child Alive" programme which aims to stop childhood deaths from preventable disease.

Red Cross knows no boundaries. In keeping with the basic Red Cross principles, help comes without regard to race, religion or politics.

Through the Child Alive programme, Canadians help the Red Cross in its efforts to make all children around the world, healthy children.

May 8 is World Red Cross Day. Remember the Red Cross - today and everyday.

Yours sincerely,
Nancy Schultheiss,
Public Relations Chairman
Georgetown and District Red Cross

Red Shield campaign

Dear Sir,

Many of you have personal knowledge of The Salvation Army in one way or another.

You know that it is a body of men and women dedicated to God and service to others. The Salvation Army is hard at work in our community as well as in almost every city and town throughout Canada.

They reach lonely, depressed, homeless men and women, parentless children, the sick and the wayward of all ages.

We can help in at least two ways: with our dollars or as a volunteer canvasser. Let us do our part to help the Red Shield Campaign reach its target of \$12,700 for the 1987 appeal in the Halton Hills area.

Yours sincerely,
Mr. David Manes,
Honorary Red Shield Chairman,
Halton Hills, Ontario.
Captain Wilson Perrin,
The Salvation Army,
Halton Hills (Action), Ontario

National Forest Week

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to support the observance of National Forest Week in Canada and to remind Canadians that our past, present and future are tied closely to this valuable resource.

The theme for 1987 - "Forests...A Shared Resource" (La forêt: des richesses pour tous) - reminds us that there are many ways in which we depend upon and enjoy the mosaic of forests which cover almost half this country. We collectively share in their enjoyment, economic use and environmental influences.

Jeanne Sauve

Berry's World



Berry's World

