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A tight squeeze

The recent fire involving rows of new housing in Markham raises questions about modern building practices.

An investigation has focused on the lack of water pressure in the fire hydrant at the Markham site. Here in Halton Hills, Fire Chief Bill Cunningham said his department will be working more closely with Halton Region to ensure there are no problems with our water supply. Water is a Regional responsibility.

Chief Cunningham believes new subdivisions should have either a vacant lot or a brick house at every seventh house to provide a fire break.

We'd go even further than that.

Today the price of land is expensive and builders have been constructing new homes so that they're almost on top of one another.

New homes today have roof overhangs where the eaves are less than 10 feet from a neighboring property.

Building houses so close together is only asking for trouble. The Markham fire shows how quickly and how damaging a blaze can be when buildings are constructed with little space between them.

There is a greater chance of a fire spreading further and faster in new subdivisions. What good is it enforcing fire codes, upgrading fire retardant materials and installing smoke alarms if we continue to build homes so close together?

Apart from the fiasco with the water pressure being low, the Markham tragedy illustrates why homes shouldn't be built so close together.

Take another look

The Georgetown hospital board's reply to town council didn't offer any olive branches to a disgruntled bunch of councillors.

Last week, board Chairman Bob Clipham responded to a request to open board meetings to the public.

The board's answer amounted to a flat no. The board justifies keeping to the status quo by quoting a report which found 70 per cent of hospitals in Ontario also hold closed door meetings.

However, the board also indicates it would work with councillors to "...deal with items which they can report publicly." A letter also mentions the chance of producing a periodic Board report for use by local newspapers.

But the hospital board could have gone further in easing the concerns some council members have with the tight-lipped policy.

The hospital is entering a new period of community interest in the facility and how it is run. Most of the reasons for the increased awareness can be attributed to the case of a popular doctor who lost his hospital privileges May 7.

The hospital has good doctors, dedicated nurses and hard-working administrators. But there is a growing public relations gap.

People in the community, the media and town council would like to know more about events and happenings at the hospital.

That doesn't mean that people are looking for mistakes the hospital has made.

By openly publicizing more news events at the hospital, the board is letting the community know it is a part of the institution. We believe people are eager to hear about the good things the hospital has to offer.

This will make it easier when the hospital plans fundraising events to expand services which benefits the town.

Being selective about information and carefully timing news releases isn't ultimately the best way to improve relations with town council and others.

The Board needs to take another look at how it can accommodate those wanting to know more about happenings at the hospital.

Rainy days and Mondays

Poor Russ Hamilton of Guelph Street in Georgetown.

He had what could be loosely termed as a bad day Monday. The victim of an injury called paratrooper's heel, Mr. Hamilton is temporarily hobbling on crutches.



Editor's notebook

By Dave Roney

While visiting a doctor in downtown Georgetown his car was ticketed on a back street for being illegally parked. Mr. Hamilton claims he wasn't aware of any "no parking" signs on the street. That mistake cost him \$5.

Then, a bit later in the day, he went into a restaurant at a Guelph Street plaza for a coffee with his wife.

He decided to use a handicapped parking space because of his injury and the effort it takes to move on crutches. This time he was hit with a \$25 ticket. Some days you just can't win.

Pat Woode of the Physically Handicapped Citizens Association said Mr. Hamilton could have purchased a temporary handicapped permit for \$1 at the town office. All it takes is a verification note from a doctor.

Remember the good old days? If you do, and want to learn more about the past, the Esqueving Historical Society is holding its June 10 meeting at Scotsdale Farm near Ballinafad.

There will be a Pot Luck supper and a tour around the set of the television series The Campbells. If you've never toured the Scotsdale farm area, don't miss the chance. It's one of the nicest places of be during a summer sunset stroll.

An if you want to become a member of the historical society, send in your \$6 to P.O. Box 51, Georgetown L7G 4T1.

Final counts have come in from the 1986 Census by Statistics Canada.

For Halton Region, our population has grown from 253,883 in 1981 to 271,389 in 1986. That's a 6.9 per cent increase.

What's really shocking about all of this is that Halton Hills has grown by only 380 people in the past five years. The town population stands at 25,570 in 1986 or a 1.1 per cent increase. Milton has grown by 14.1 per cent during the same time and Oakville by 15 per cent. Burlington, by comparison, has only increased by 1.6 per cent.

Overall, Vaughn, Ontario is the fastest growing municipality in Canada. It doubled its growth rate, to 119.2 per cent.

A Campbellville man is taking Halton Region to small claims court in Milton today (Wednesday) for \$142.52. That's what it cost Ted van der Veen to have the front end of his 1984 Rabbit re-aligned after hitting a pothole on the Guelph Line just north of Highway 401 last November.

Ministry of Transportation studies have found Halton roads to be in poor shape, calling them Ontario's worst.

Mitterrand has easy act to follow



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

When, French President Francois Mitterrand has come and gone and, miracle of miracles, nobody seems offended.

Well, not seriously offended. It would be unrealistic to expect any French president or premier to visit this country without somebody, somewhere, wishing he had said something else, done something else or smiled somewhere else.

If I were the president of France, I would place Canada at the bottom of the list of places to visit. Come to think of it, Mr. Mitterrand probably did. His just-concluded official visit was the first to Canada by a French president since General de Gaulle roared "Vive le Quebec libre" in 1967.

That was not a happy occasion. And, in the meantime, we have had nearly 20 years of constant irritations involving the Ottawa-Paris-Quebec City triangle - much of it decidedly silly, some of it the stuff of toddlers.

It reached its peak of absurdity during the heady days of the Parti Quebecois government, when then-premier Rene Levesque got enormous enjoyment out of being treated like a head of state in Paris. Actually, the enjoyment probably came more from Ottawa's furious reaction.

Pierre Trudeau, as prime minister, did not chuckle much

about this which, in turn, probably made Mr. Levesque chuckle a great deal more.

Anyway, the game developed into a bizarre spectator sport, the object being to see which government, the federal or provincial, got the best treatment by France. We counted the number of trips to the various capitals, who spent the most time with the various leaders, whose red carpet was longest.

And, of course, we hung on every word for a hint of favoritism.

BIG CHANGE

Mind you, this has changed dramatically since the election of the Bourassa government in Quebec and the Mulroney government in Ottawa. As they say in bureaucratized relationships between Canada and France have been "normalized."

But old habits die hard. And when President Mitterrand took the plunge and came to Canada, he probably knew full well his trip would represent a study in the behavioral

sciences. Every sentence would be scrutinized, every nuance interpreted and, in all probability, misinterpreted.

Admittedly, General de Gaulle ensured that Mr. Mitterrand had a fairly easy act to follow. All he had to do was say "Vive le Canada" - which he did - and he was guaranteed a standing ovation - which he got.

Because he said this in Parliament, and because he didn't say anything offensive to anyone, his 40-minute speech got rave reviews, not to mention headlines. What was happily overlooked was the fact that, as speeches go, this one listed sharply toward boredom.

But, yes, there was the odd complaint. Several Montreal newspapers noted, with a touch of disappointment, that during the entire 40 minutes, Mr. Mitterrand didn't once mention Quebec. Tut, tut.

It didn't take long for the visiting president to correct any misconceptions that might have arisen over this. The next day he was in the Quebec legislature, and not once did he utter the word Canada.

One commentator in Quebec City noted that the camera angle in the legislature didn't always focus on the Canadian flag - but then there was no Quebec flag anywhere in the

Ottawa visit. Fair is fair.

As to constant reminders that he was spending only 28 hours in Quebec during his five-day visit, the president had a ready answer. He would be back in Quebec City this fall for the francophone summit.

STILL SPECIAL

I suspect that the president's Canadian speeches were written, rewritten and re-written before he ever mounted a podium. He'd be fully aware to the consequences of, say, referring to Quebec as a nation or a country, or placing Mr. Bourassa's name ahead of Mr. Mulroney, or vice-versa.

On the other hand, he could not ignore the reality of Quebec being a largely French-speaking province that has always had a natural affinity with France.

His remarks were beautifully crafted. "I want to reaffirm tonight the importance and value France attaches to this relationship, a fraternity which transcends boundaries, without ignoring them."

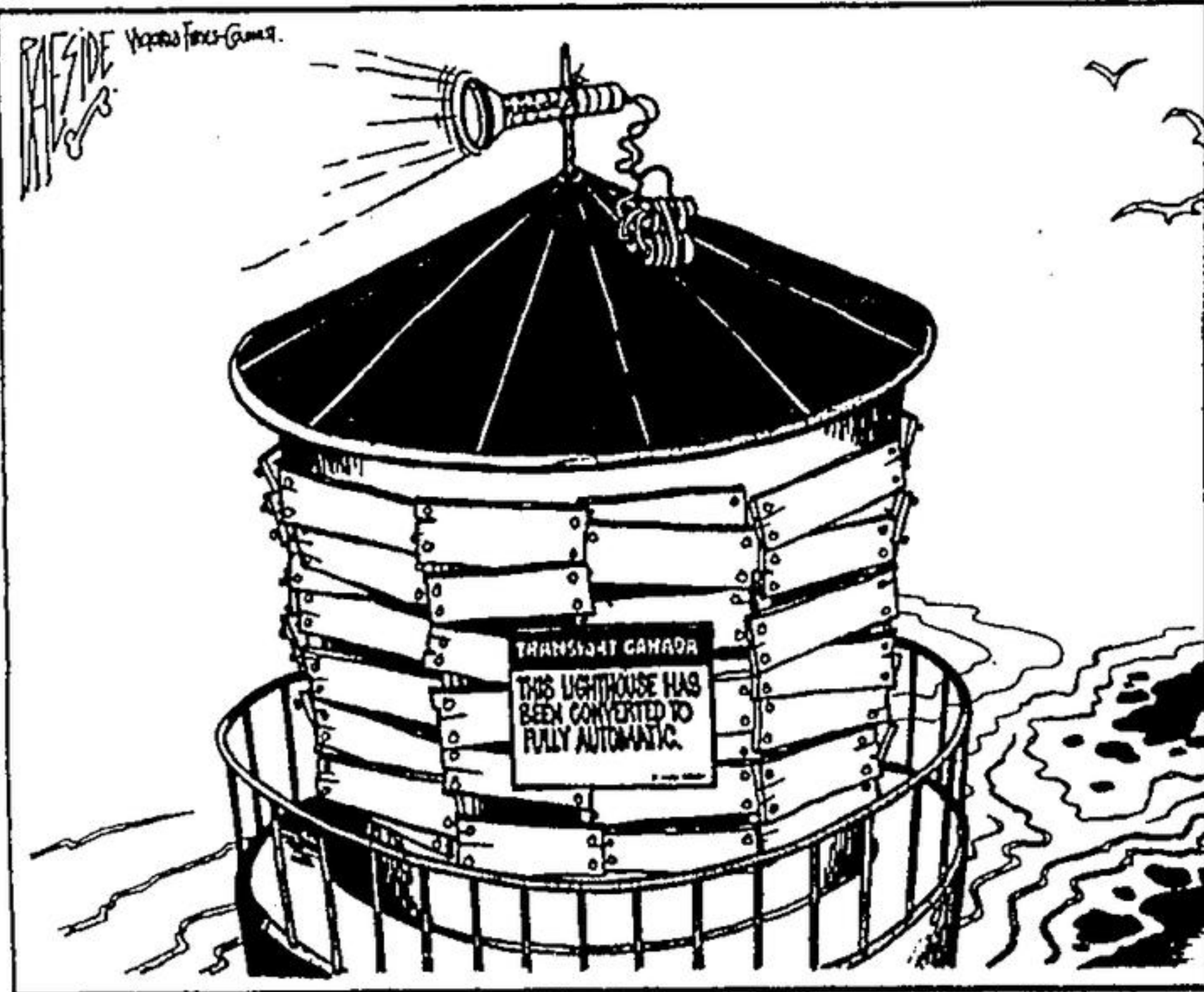
He talked of Quebec being "a special place" - an expression which would offend no one. And he also mentioned there should be a "new encounter" between Quebec and France. Since that could mean anything to anybody, it was also safe.

Naturally, after using the word "special" in the Franco-Quebec context, the president had to assure a Toronto news conference this didn't mean French trade would be steered away from other provinces.

This being Canada, such clarifications are always necessary, particularly after the president had complimented Montreal's business community. Compliments, like federal government contracts, have to be spread evenly.

In fact, Mr. Mitterrand did such a good job of keeping things even that one Montreal newspaper called the visit "speedily ordinary."

And, for a French president visiting Canada, there can be no higher praise.



Citizens' forum

Does death penalty work?

Dear Sir:

There is only one question that needs to be answered during the death penalty debate: does it work? Is Capital Punishment a general deterrent? Notwithstanding the view of some of the public, the experts by in large say no, it does not deter.

Does it enhance the moral fibre of Canadian society? Some of us might disagree, but the majority of our moral leaders say it diminishes our moral standard.

Can the death of one person atone for the death of another? No it can not. Nothing can.

Can we say that the majority of "informed" voters favour the return of this measure? A recent Gallup poll showed, that since there has been discussion on this issue over the past six months, those wanting the return of the death penalty have significantly dropped.

The more this debate becomes public and people are informed of the facts, the more Canadians will see the futility of the death penalty.

Can first degree murderers be rehabilitated? I and my organization have over the years worked with many men who have murdered, including some originally sentenced to die. We know from our experience that many can go on to become responsible citizens. Surely a mark of a civilized and progressive country is to be able to turn around some of those who have committed the most despicable of acts.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Wilbee
Director: Community Relations
St. Leonard's Society of Canada

MPs concerned over VIA changes

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter, addressed to the federal Minister of Transport John Croable, was submitted for publication in the Herald.

Dear Minister: We the undersigned Members of Parliament continue to be concerned about the proposed changes to the VIA Rail schedule on the Toronto-Georgetown, Guelph, Kitchener, Stratford, London route.

The proposed changes were announced without consultation with the very groups established to discuss such matters. Further, there was no attempt beforehand to meet with the mayors of the municipalities involved or the transportation people of the municipalities to see if there was any way in which local services could be used to help facilitate and promote VIA Rail services.

It would appear to us that no account has been taken of the population growth in the area, the economic activity of the area and the market opportunities presented by the area. VIA Rail seems to know how to cut costs but they have not investigated in any

business-like way the other side of the ledger, namely how to increase income.

As members of Parliament for the regions involved, we urge you to instruct VIA Rail to delay the changes until our local liaison committees and transportation authorities have had time to discuss these matters fully with VIA Rail in an effort to increase ridership and reduce costs.

Yours sincerely,
Harry Brightwell, M.P.
Perth
John McDermid, M.P.
Brampton-Georgetown
Walter McLean, P.C., M.P.
Waterloo
John Reimer, M.P.
Kitchener
William C. Winegard, M.P.
Guelph

10,440 residents took 'challenge'

Dear Sir:

On behalf of our department I would like to take this opportunity to thank 10,440 residents of Halton Hills who supported the Participation Challenge, May 27th.

Special thanks are owing to the William Neilson Company Limited for their contribution of telephone lines, staff from Work That Body, Jesse Sargent who volunteered her time to answer the phones, sports groups, schools and the local media who gave us coverage and support.

Joanne Wilson
Recreation and Parks Department

In your opinion

Are you coping with the heat?



WILLIAM BENNETT: "It's not bad now. I wear shorts and light tops and look at the women. Yesterday was very hot. Look at the sunburn I got. We're staying in the basement where it's cool."



COLLEEN CUMMINGS: "I wear black and sweatshirts. I wear baggy sweatshirts so I don't sweat as much. If you wear white, you feel hotter."



J.U.D.Y. MAKIYOUN: "It's great. I've just come out of the pool, so I don't mind it at all. I've been swimming every half hour. As soon as I'm dry, I'm in again."



PAUL HAWKINS: "I'm from Newfoundland. In the dead of summer we'll get 30 degree weather. I got out of the house, drink lots of juice and wear my shorts. Don't just lie around or you just die."



CORINNE CLAXTON: "Fine, I love it. We've been waiting six months for this and it's finally here. I have no complaints... absolutely none."



30 years ago

Peter Canham and Barbara Alcott were named best high school cadets by Lt-Col. J.R. Barber at the annual Georgetown High School Cadet Inspection and march held in the park.

Dr. Charles Best, co-discoverer of insulin and head of the famous Banting-Best Institute at the University of Toronto, just returned from an lengthy lecture tour to spend a few days with his sons, Sandy at Greenock Farm in the outskirts of Georgetown.

Donna Mae Campbell of Inglewood married Floyd (Bud) Valey on June 1. The new Mrs. Valey was given two showers by Mrs. Steven Eason and Mrs. Dennis Wright and by Lou Kline of Brampton.

Mrs. G. Somerville, Acton was re-elected president of the Halton Women's Institutes at the 56th District Annual meeting in Ballinafad United Church.

15 years ago

Georgetown celebrates its 50th anniversary with three days worth of celebrations. The festivities begin with a beer garden at the armory on Friday and end with a fireworks display at the fairgrounds on Sunday.

The Georgetown Sluggers clubbed the Gophers in the T-ball league 2-2. Mike Doucette and John Scott stood out as Slugger top hitters.

The University Women's Club had a successful book sale on the weekend. Eleanor Langdon was elected as president of the new executive with Donna Denison and Shirley Scott serving as first and second vice-presidents.

Mr. and Mrs. David Hurrin celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday. Attending the celebration were their two youngest grand-children Derek and Brent Presswood.

10 years ago

Hopeful ticket holders crowded Memorial Arena last week for the telecast of the Wintario Draw. Memorial was the first Ontario arena to be restored from Wintario grants. There were no apparent winners among the crowd.

Fourteen Georgetown Athletes will compete in the OFSAA Track and Field Championships in Sudbury this weekend. Some of the Athletes who performed well at the regional meet in Bradford include Ian Clark in the 1500 and 3000 metre races and the Junior Girls relay squad of Hayley Quinn, Meredith McLaren, Heather Clarke and Claire Galbraith placed second in the 4 X 100 metre race.

Twenty-three track and field records were set at Centennial Public School's annual meet. Chris Zilio won the Junior Girls hurdles and Linda Ferguson won the Senior Girls hurdles.

5 years ago

Eleven scouts served as extras for a Japanese television production last week. The film, Viva Canada, is about a Shiba dog named Goro. Appearing in the film from the Ballinafad, First, Fourth and Eighth Georgetown scout troops were Jeff Walker, Tristan Sones, Garry Nutwell, Jimmy Clark, Scott McLean, Michael McMurray, Greg Balraew, Terry Dreyer, Scott Webb, Craig Oatchuk and Andrew Soward.

Acton was left off the map, literally, in an Ontario map released by the Ministry of Transportation, headed by Halton MP J. James Snow.