

the HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills - Established 1866

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Lions share of honor

It was made evident recently that the people of Georgetown can be grateful for some efforts put forth on their behalf.

To begin with, the Georgetown Lions Club is to be commended for the work they do to recognize the people of the community who go that extra yard to make Georgetown a more enjoyable place to live.

The Citizen of the Year banquet last Tuesday was an excellent affair and served to honor someone who was very deserving, indeed. The selection process is not always an easy one, but it must fall upon someone to make the final decision, and we're fortunate to have the Lions to coordinate such an undertaking.

Georgetown can also be grateful for having people like Tom Ramautarsingh, the 1988 recipient of the Citizen of the Year Award.

For Mr. Ramautarsingh, and others before him, the greatest pleasure has been putting something back into the community.

And it's only fitting that these efforts should be recognized in some manner.

Adieu to the Hills



Editor's Notebook

Mike Turner
Herald Editor

About six years ago, over a few friendly nectar, I remarked to a friend how I might be interested in taking up writing again, not so much as a career but more as a diversion from my regular routine.

That remark eventually led to my becoming editor of the Halton Hills Herald.

About two years ago, speaking to another friend who happened to be in the business, I remarked how it would be interesting to work at a different newspaper every few years - variety being the spice of life and all that.

That remark, in part, now leads me away from Halton Hills to take up a position with a newspaper in Listowel.

The decision to move wasn't by any means an easy one. This community has a great deal to offer and has been good to me, and I've enjoyed working with all the people here at the paper.

Fortunately someone has been selected to replace me, who I feel will do an excellent job for the community.

Brian MacLeod has been covering the local political scene for close to two years, and assumes the position of editor here in the wake of my departure.

Brian has had quite a high profile in town, and has proven himself worthy of the editor's position. My tenure as editor was made much easier because of the diligent work of Brian, covering local council, and the Regional political scene.

I can be sure he'll have no problem taking the reins and I know he'll do the same thorough job as editor that he did as senior reporter at the Herald.

And there is another "up" side to all this. While Brian is competent, having to look at him for extended periods of time can take its toll.

Donna Kell, on the other hand, is far easier to look at for extended periods of time. I can attest to this,

having sat across from Donna in our office for the better part of a year.

Donna will take over as senior reporter and I have every confidence she will do an excellent job, while at the same time brightening up an otherwise dull media table at council meetings.

There's a sign that hangs in the corner of the Montreal Canadiens' dressing room that reads: "To you from failing hands we pass the torch..."

... and whenever we hear that, Guy Lafleur and I have a real good retch.

Sorry folks, but misty-eyed good-byes just ain't my style.

I wish everyone the very best and I'll definitely be back from time to time for some of that good old Hills hospitality.

Government's image problem lingers

There was a joke lurking about in some bureaucratic circles a couple of months ago about a new phase of privatization.

Ottawa's high-and-mighty, you may recall, banned smoking in federal offices on Jan. 1. But that didn't deter some devotees of the weed.

A boisterous few held protests inside and outside their offices. The less valiant, however, fled their places of work and loitered in nearby private buildings and shopping areas while they lit up for a quick morning puff.

Shopkeepers arriving to open their stores for business later in the day were greeted by the fragrance of stale tobacco smoke. Many were not pleased.

Some chuckled that the government had rid itself of smokers and turned them over to the private sector.

The smoking incident is a minor sidelight. But it's a reminder of the kind of thing that brings contempt raining down on the heads of public servants. Too many federal employees seem to have little pride in their work.

This isn't intended to malign public service. In fact, while the federal government has its share of shirkers (as do all workplaces),

Ontario will grow too big

How big is too big?

The latest provincial population projections indicate an Ontario population of about 12 million people within 22 years.

That's a remarkable figure, and it has some obvious side effects that no one seems to be even considering.

The province today has about nine million inhabitants, which means we're talking about adding 150,000 a year every year for two decades.

That's adding more than the population of Oshawa annually.

Perhaps half of the newcomers will be immigrants, the vast majority of whom will come from outside Canada.

At the same time, the population mix inside the province will shift. Those over 75 years of age will double in number, to almost 900,000, while the over-65s will comprise one out of every six Ontarians.

These figures are all based on guesswork, of course. No one can predict the future that exactly.

But it is educated guesswork based on existing trends, policies and commonly accepted observations.

For instance (to quote from the provincial Treasury Board's demographics bulletin), experience throughout the industrialized world indicates that government programs such as daycare and family allowances that are designed to stimulate fertility really don't have much influence.

Immigration is the largest variable, influenced as it is by



Queen's Park

Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

government policy and economic conditions.

Good economic times mean more immigrants.

All this is very interesting and is useful information to have.

What would be even more interesting would be some indication that the provincial government has thought through the implications.

Consider: The health care system is already under financial strain as the government tries to bring its growth rate down to some sustainable figure.

Yes, the financial reality is that proportionately fewer people of working age will be supporting proportionately more elderly non-working people.

And those elderly consume more than half of all health care services. In fact, the older they are the more they use.

New immigrants and the young will be devoting increasing portions of their income to keeping the elderly in a position to which they'd like to remain accustomed.

Equally important is that both immigrants from abroad and many of those who migrate internally will head for the Toronto area.

That city and adjacent municipalities, already bursting at the seams with only three million or so people, will climb to more than five million in those 20 years.

There will be no new land available to build the housing, no new road and transit infrastructure to move them around, and no new garbage dumps to take their refuse.

Some suggest we also will face water shortages and sewer overflows as well.

None of this is a surprise, of course. As long ago as 1977, an Ontario government planning document said the "notion that Ontario is a land of limitless space is, in fact, a myth, and a dangerous one."

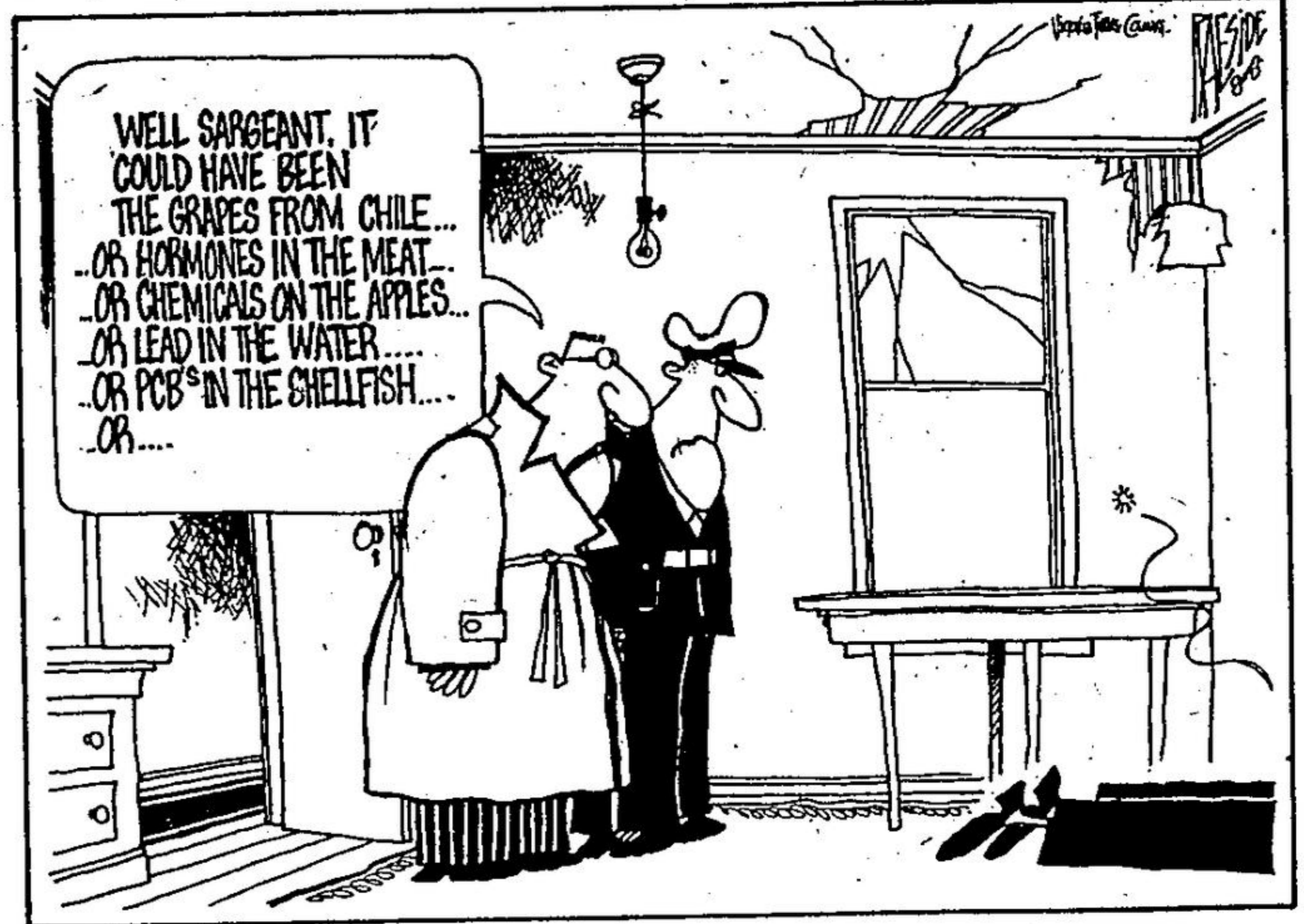
In southern Ontario - which, when it comes to population growth, is the part of the province that really matters - the population density exceeds that of Britain's 175 people to the square mile.

The congestion can only increase, for if a city or country can't build out it builds up. Look at Hong Kong.

Unfortunately, our social, economic and political systems lack Hong Kong's ability to adapt to events quickly and flexibly.

For instance, look at our absurd low-density zoning laws that favor single family homes. These are going to have to go in favor of high-density if we're really going to add three million more people in 20 years, two-thirds of them to the Toronto area.

Otherwise it is time to conclude that how big is already too big.



Ottawa

Vic Parsons

most public servants work hard day in and day out. That's especially so in this time of austerity, when staff are cut and vacancies remain unfilled.

History shows that when societies, dating back to ancient Egypt and China, creep out of the dark ages, they develop a bureaucracy to administer and enforce laws that provide a basis for orderly growth.

STEREOTYPE MAINTAINED
However, every so often, something comes along to prop up the old bureaucratic stereotypes. The latest is the Federal Court case being pursued by the Public Service Alliance, the largest federal employee union, against a successful productivity plan introduced by Statistics Canada.

The plan was tried in the federal agency's travel section and proved highly popular among staff. Under

the system, if employees get more work done they are permitted to take off some of the time they save.

Productivity in the section has almost doubled in six months. One worker said she gets two extra days off a month. Staff work together almost as a family. And there's now time available to introduce new surveys.

The union is challenging the plan because it doesn't want employees negotiating working conditions directly with the government. In an argument that might be more sympathetically viewed by the public, they also say such plans put too much pressure on those who aren't able to be more productive, such as workers with health problems or disabilities.

A cynic also might see a situation in which some staff deliberately ease up before a productivity plan is brought in so they can benefit more when one is in place.

The publicity given the union challenge will only confirm for some that regrettable public service image.

WASTE SEEN
Recently, an intriguing Gallup Poll was published in a Toronto newspaper. It found that respondents across Canada estimate that 38 cents of every

federal dollar spent is wasted. (That compares with 33 cents for provincial governments and 25 cents for local governments.)

These are not scientific figures arrived at by discerning citizens

after scrupulous research. They are merely an average of the guesses offered by those polled. But they do tell us something about the way the public views government.

The poll also showed that, regionally, the skepticism increases with distance from Ottawa. British Columbians rate the federal spending waste at 43 cents per dollar and those in the Atlantic set it at 41 cents. Ontarians are most comfortable with the way Ottawa spends, setting the wastage figure at 36 cents.

The Prairies are on the national average and Quebec's wastage figure is 37 cents. (Ontario is most skeptical about local spending, with an average of 28 cents, and British Columbians are by far the toughest on their provincial government, at 39 cents.)

The survey showed, too, that those with the lowest incomes and poorest education are more inclined to believe in federal government waste.