

Editorial

Give it teeth

If the new Aggregates Act is passed by the provincial government there are hopes of a better future for ridings like Halton North. Our riding, which contains a good chunk of the Niagara Escarpment, has some of the busiest quarrying activity in Ontario, Halton North MPP Walt Elliot says.

The Act is supposed to tighten the rules for aggregate producers. Apart from gaining \$500,000 in royalties for the riding, the act promises to force aggregate producers to submit a site rehabilitation plan to return quarries to "normal" once quarrying is complete.

We won't know for a few years, but it's absolutely imperative that the act has teeth.

It's that lack of teeth that has caused those who are fighting the Acton quarry landfill proposal so many headaches.

The previous owners of the quarry apparently had filed a rehabilitation plan, but they sold the quarry and licence to United Aggregates and burned all the papers, leaving any rehabilitation plans in ashes.

Now, amidst forgotten promises of restoring the quarry's natural state, we have a proposal for a massive garbage dump.

We've had enough of promises. We want to see these aggregate producers stick to their plans. We want to see our government protect our environment.

Count your Loonies



Editor's Notebook

Brian MacLeod
Herald Editor

Hooray! Let's call July 3 a national holiday. We can dance in the streets, smile at our bankers, wave wads of cash at gas station attendants and actually start counting our Loonies.

Why all the fuss? Because it's National Tax Freedom Day on July 3.

Yes, the Vancouver B.C. based Fraser Institute, our national think tank, has declared the third day of the seventh month Tax Freedom Day. Based on complicated calculations, Tax Freedom Day represents the day Canadians begin working for themselves.

But we can't all celebrate at once. Each province has its own Tax Freedom Day. In Ontario, Tax Freedom Day actually falls on July 7 - the latest of all the provinces. Prince Edward Island has the earliest Tax Freedom Day on May 23.

The nation-wide Tax Freedom Day on July 3 is actually two days later than last year. It's the 181st day of the year. Pretty hard to believe, isn't it?

Well, here's how it's calculated. The Fraser Institute has set the average cash income for an Ontario family at \$50,500. According to the institute, in 1989 we'll pay \$3,886 in profits tax, \$9,995 in income tax, \$4,583 in sales tax, \$1,021 for liquor, tobacco, amusement and other excise taxes, \$679 for

auto fuel and motor vehicle licence taxes, \$3,660 for social security pension and medical and hospital taxes, \$1,915 for property tax, \$88 for natural resource taxes, \$560 for import duties, and \$622 "other" taxes for a grand total of \$25,913.

That's the highest of all 10 provinces and higher than the national average of \$23,094. Prince Edward Island, by comparison, will pay only \$14,407 this year. But their average family income is listed at only \$37,000.

The same report says Albertans, not Ontario residents, will spend the most per capita this year. Each person in Alberta is expected to spend \$4,833.40 in 1989, while those of us who live in Ontario will each spend only \$4,339.30.

Hey, guess what? All this about Tax Freedom Day doesn't include those huge red numbers our governments run up every year. Including deficit financing, Tax Freedom Day in Canada would be August 1.

Are you disgusted yet? Actually, let's not dismiss our various levels of governments' efforts. Today's society has conveniences never dreamed of in the past. But they're expensive and it seems our governments believe we're willing to pay for them.

Pioneer Days suffered a bit of a setback this year with chilly, wet weather but we didn't stay away in droves, according to Business Improvement Area co-ordinator Margaret Vint. Thursday and Friday were pretty cold but Main Street was buzzing with bargain hunters, she said.

The downpour on Saturday pretty well washed away the remnants of Pioneer Days but "we'll live to fight again," said Ms. Vint.

Nuclear power is on the move



Queen's Park

Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

OTTAWA-Nuclear power is back.

Maybe. There's nothing definite yet, but a sense of optimism existed at the joint Canadian Nuclear Association/Canadian Nuclear Society meeting here this week.

It was an intangible as much as anything, a feeling that, in an age where acid rain and fossil-fuel pollution are increasingly unacceptable, nuclear offers the best alternative.

In Ontario, in particular, decisions must be made this year about new reactor construction after the Darlington station (just east of Oshawa) is finished, and there are increasing hints that the Liberal government is going to go for further nuclear construction.

This is as much to keep an indigenous high-technology industry alive as it is to meet the obvious need for more power.

Not that everything is sweetness and light for nuclear.

Although both federal minister Jake Epp and Ontario Energy Minister Bob Wong were present and said the usual nice things, it is clear that discussions between them for restructuring the in-

dustry are a long way from completion.

The federal atomic agency is Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., which is usually referred to simply as AECL. At the provincial level, Ontario Hydro has effectively become the equivalent.

To quote Epp: "A year or two ago, AECL was unable to fully fund its engineering work out of operating revenues." It asked that the government help finance the design of a new reactor, the Candu 3.

"That request prompted us to take a hard look at the larger issues surrounding Canada's nuclear program.

"Was there a solid future for the Candu business? Could Canada reasonably afford to pay the cost of staying in the business until the markets improved?"

The answer is yes.

"However, we do have some concerns," he added. "AECL has become largely marginal to the nuclear program in Ontario, where the bulk of the world's Candu capacity resides.

BENEFICIARY

"At the same time, Ontario is a significant indirect beneficiary of AECL's major research and development and design efforts - a fact recognized by Ontario Hydro's contributions to AECL's research effort."

With AECL and Ontario Hydro as the two key players and the private sector in a supporting role, Epp suggested a "restructured nuclear Team Canada" be formed.

It was all very up beat, although neither Epp nor Wong really touched on the major bone of contention between the two levels of government: money.

Ottawa wants Ontario to pick up more of the nuclear tab. And, Ontario Hydro, which now does 99 per cent of its own engineering on Candu, would have to return to the old days where design was more evenly shared with AECL.

A consultant's report is due in a month or so on restructuring, and major discussions are under way with New Brunswick and Saskatchewan about the possibility of their building the new Candu 3.

This would be a smaller, less expensive reactor, made easy-to-assemble by using modular construction, and geared to the export market.

But before it could be sold, a demonstration model would have to be built in Canada.

So far, it is said, Ontario hasn't expressed a great deal of interest, even though its energy demand problems are becoming severe.

But Saskatchewan and especially New Brunswick are interested.

In any case, there is somehow the feeling that nuclear has turned the corner, that the Ontario government isn't about to axe the nuclear option (as it looked like it would three years ago) and that the federal government isn't about to abandon the field.

As one observer here suggested, the nuclear industry is to Ontario what oil is to Alberta and fish to Newfoundland. None of them can afford to walk away from it.



Mulroney's popularity is tumbling



Ottawa

Stewart MacLeod
Thomson News Service

With the next federal election three or four years away, the opinion polls on party standings don't have a great deal of practical significance these days. Still, the tumbling popularity of the Mulroney government cannot be ignored.

What the latest Gallup survey suggests is that, if an election were held today, the Liberal Party would form the government with 181 seats, the Conservatives would win 80 and the New Democrats would drop to 34.

This is quite a turnaround for the two major parties, since the Tories won 168 seats in the Nov. 21 general election, compared with 83 for the Liberals. The New Democrats won 43. It's not often that such a dramatic change occurs in a seven-month period.

Right now, according to Dr. Gallup, the Liberals lead with 45

per cent of the popular vote, while the Tories have dropped back to 30 per cent and the New Democrats hover around their traditional 21 per cent.

The only region where the Tories lead is on the Prairies, with 42 per cent. In Quebec and Ontario, they stand at 29 per cent; in Atlantic Canada, at a dismal 21 per cent.

When you couple this with another Gallup poll, rating the performance of prime ministers, it doesn't provide Mr. Mulroney with much happy reading. No less than 53 per cent of Canadians think that Pierre Trudeau was a better prime minister than Mr. Mulroney - who was selected best by only 23 per cent of respondents.

Fifteen per cent didn't think much of either man.

It appears as though the popularity of Mr. Trudeau is increasing in step with the length of time he has been out of office. Now, even on the Prairies, where the Liberal prime minister was so openly disliked, he has moved ahead of the present prime minister.

While only 29 per cent of Prairie respondents thought Mr. Mulroney was the better prime minister, 42 per cent now name Mr. Trudeau.

And in Quebec, Mr. Trudeau leads Mr. Mulroney 57-22.

Again, this is more amusing than significant. The chances of Mr. Trudeau ever running against Mr. Mulroney are rather slim.

Had the Tory fall in popularity occurred immediately before an election, it would be front-page news all over Canada. But, not only is there an obvious lack of concern among federal Tories, they had expected to go through a post-election slump.

The idea in the immediate aftermath of an election victory is to get the unpopular measures out of the way so the last couple of years of the mandate can be devoted to re-establishing footings for re-election.

The present government has not been particularly effective in getting any measures - unpopular or otherwise - out of the way since the election, but that hasn't slowed its fall on the popularity charts. Even though there is very limited progress in terms of legislation, there has been a steady flow of disconcerting news out of Ottawa.

And now that Liberal Leader John Turner has announced he's retiring, he seems to be better liked than ever before.