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Expensive expenses

Halton Hills' five hydro commissioners ran up a \$33,000 bill attending conferences last year.

Murt Allison, Bill Smith, Jim Fisher, Roger Haggett and Russ Miller make up the hydro commission of Halton Hills.

Their spending demands some tough questions.

Roger Haggett, who was appointed to the hydro commission last year after the death of Doug Mason, spent only \$765 on conferences last year. Jim Fisher, who was elected to the hydro commission in 1988, spent \$3,600.

Bill Smith, who has been on the Halton Hills Hydro Commission for 20 years, spent \$7,000 on conferences and Murt Allison, an 11-year member of the commission, spent almost \$14,000 on conferences including a \$4,100 trip to New Orleans.

Mayor Miller spent \$3,100 on the same trip. Both hydro commissioners were accompanied by their wives at taxpayers expense.

Hydro commissioners are now saying the practice of paying wives' expenses will stop.

While many councillors and hydro commissioners have demonstrated fiscal responsibility with their conference budget in the past, it's clear that a firm policy limiting the amount spent on conferences annually by municipal politicians at every level is badly needed.

And so is a policy which gives the public quick and clear access to spending figures by politicians.

For years town and Regional councillors have presented their spending voluntarily and openly to the public. Halton Hills Hydro commissioners only agreed to release their expenses after a formal letter from the Herald requesting the figures and after a meeting to discuss the issue.

In these days of double-digit budget increases, it's important that politicians be very open about their spending which is bound to undergo close public scrutiny.

Politicians at the town and Regional level, including the hydro commission, should act now to ensure that spending on conferences never gets out of control and that spending stays very much in the public eye.

Fighting cancer

Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook



Hundreds of volunteers from Georgetown and Acton will soon be knocking on doors looking for help in the fight against cancer.

In Georgetown alone, 200 volunteers will be hitting the streets looking to raise \$110,000 for cancer research in the month of April.

The Georgetown cancer society kicks off its fundraising campaign with a breakfast at the North Halton Golf and Country Club April 4.

In Acton, the campaign is already under way. Organizers started the campaign there with a fashion show at the Acton Legion put on by Elizabeth's Fashions. Proceeds from the fashion show go to the cancer society.

Both units will look for successful daffodil sales, the recognized symbol of the cancer society, to enhance their campaign. Daffodil day in Canada this year is April 7.

Nationwide, the cancer society is hoping to raise \$70 million in April. The cancer society strives to make

each dollar count. Of every dollar donated, 57 cents go towards research, 18 goes towards patient services, 15 cents are used for education, six cents are earmarked for fundraising and only four cents are used for administration.

The research area is becoming more interesting for cancer scientists every year. Scientists are now concentrating their study on defective genes called oncogenes. These genes are believed to trigger the change from normal cells to malignant cells which spread and cause cancer. If oncogenes can be controlled, a cure for cancer may be possible, cancer scientists say.

Scientists want to measure oncogenes to accurately identify the stages of cancer. Eventually, research scientists hope to develop blood tests to detect the loss of protective anti-oncogenes. That would allow doctors to catch the early warning signs of cancer, before the cancer even develops, the cancer society says.

Driving around Halton Hills' picturesque countryside and taking in all the well-kept lawns in town make it easy to forget that there are people in Georgetown who don't have the luxury of two cars and three bedrooms. Just such a reminder came across my desk Monday when I heard the Mountainview Baptist Church will open a food bank.

The food bank itself will be open April 4 and April 18 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Jim Bradley got roasted by opposition members

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park
Thomson News Service



They didn't quite burn, Environment Minister Jim Bradley on a funeral pyre of tires here as the spring sitting of the legislature opened.

But observers could be forgiven for feeling he'd have felt less heat at the tire fire than from opposition politicians.

In a word, Bradley got roasted.

It wasn't just the Hagersville tire fire, either. He was questioned about possible environmental contamination at the site of the closed Roman Catholic St. Bruno's elementary school in Toronto. He was thumped over the high levels of fecal matter in the well water at Spencerville in eastern Ontario.

Bradley was learning a lesson he has mainly managed to avoid up until now: that it doesn't matter how right or wrong you are on an environmental issue, the real question is whether you can be tagged as somehow failing to "protect the environment."

Both the New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives went after him with green clubs, particularly over the Hagersville fire.

TIRE TAX

After all, Treasurer Bob Nixon had decided in the last budget to levy a \$5 "environmental cleanup tax" on every tire sold in Ontario. This was partly because he drove past the Hagersville dump every day.

That tax has brought in \$30 million, so how come only \$1 million of it has been spent on recycling efforts?

Then there was the question of why many frantic media people couldn't contact Bradley the first few days of the fire. They assumed he was ducking them.

NDP Leader Bob Rae wanted to know why Bradley hadn't used available legal tools ("technicalities" Bradley called them) to speed up enforcing safe standards at the site, something the owner was fighting every step of the way.

And, finally, they sought to find out why Bradley didn't know about the 1977 fire at the same location.

It was all rather like earth day in the legislature, with Bradley being buried in accusations and recriminations.

How fair it all was is another question.

With the perfect hindsight now available, it is quite clear Bradley would have acted sooner against tire dumps. It is obvious he didn't consider them a potentially major hazard.

But, then, neither had the opposition. In a decade, no opposition critic had ever suggested the tire dumps constituted a super threat to the environment.

One reason might be that tire deposits simply aren't that much

of a problem beyond ugliness and, now, cost. Even though Hagersville has been described in wildly exaggerated terms as the "worst ecological disaster in Ontario history," there is still no evidence of any permanent harm to the environment.

Even the other problem packages that have been thrown at him quick and fast in recent days aren't necessarily the apocalypse either.

COMMON

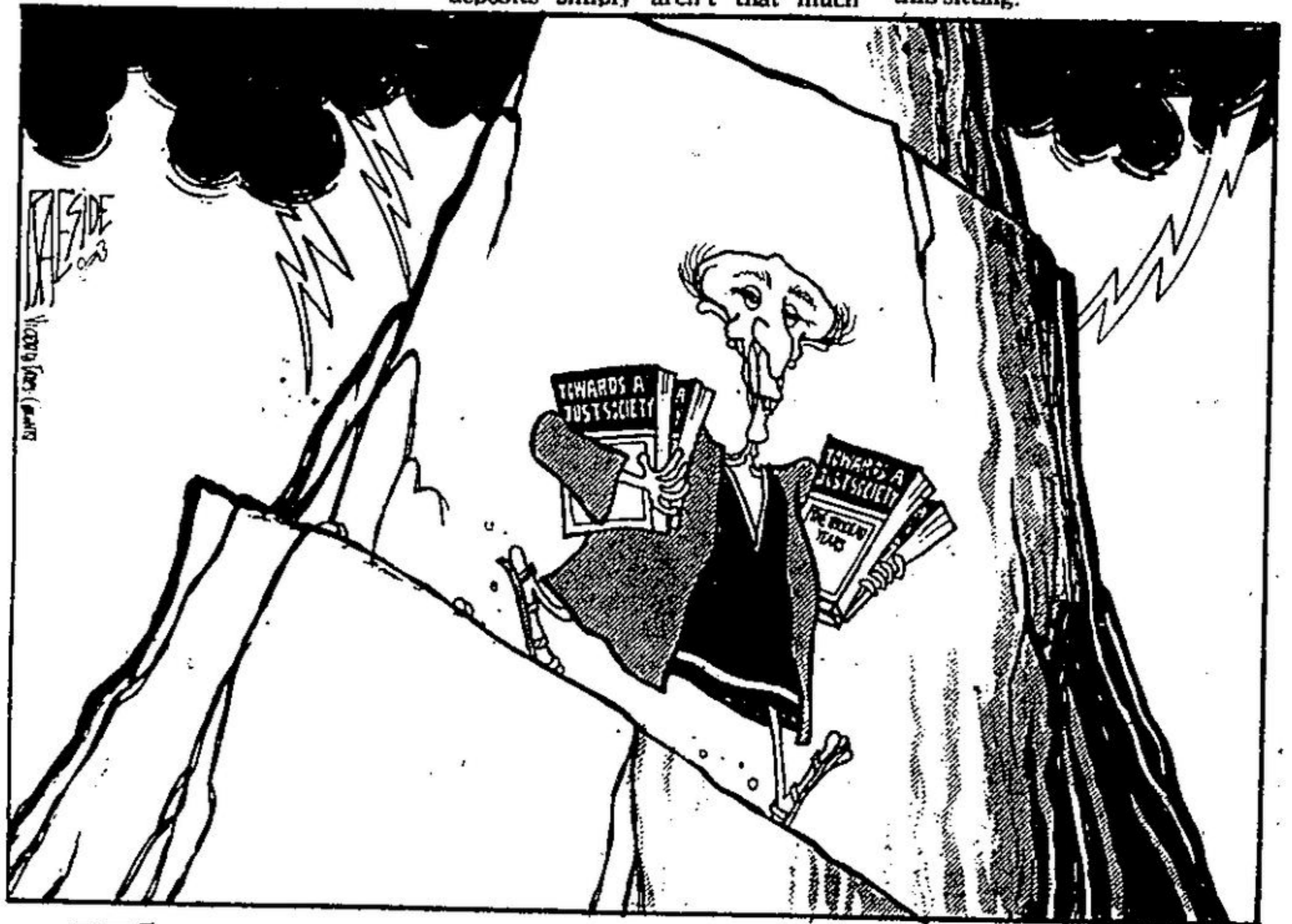
Spencerville's fecal matter problem is quite common (try a Toronto beach in summer). The remedies, while slow and expensive, are under way.

As for St. Bruno's, the medical evidence, as opposed to the political posturing, doesn't indicate any need for a panic reaction.

This isn't to say Bradley has been brilliant about all this. In fact, his refusal to concede he might have erred on the importance of tire dumps is what is causing offence to many.

In particular, because he is an inflexible advocate of recycling and an opponent of burning waste, he has consistently ignored proven alternatives such as high temperature incineration, with the tires used as fuel, in cement kilns. The cement companies are willing, but Bradley would rather stack than smoke.

Now, with the chlorinated water controversy and other looming issues, one thing is certain, Bradley's perennial grin is going to be badly stretched by the end of this sitting.



These are Voices of Fire but they're a bit cheaper

Vic Parsons

Ottawa Bureau
Thomson News Service



Any resemblance of the fictional characters below to persons living or dead is purely intentional:

OTTAWA—"Art, schmart!" The MP for Upper Elbow-Venison Tickle slams the edge of his desk so hard that the noise jars his companion from blissful slumber.

Elvis Droodge has been raving on for a good 10 minutes in his office about the purchase of the

abstract painting Voice of Fire by the National Gallery.

"It's absolutely outrageous," Droodge, a backbench rookie, continues. "I go to my riding for the weekend and everywhere I turn people are onto me about the goods and services tax. 'We don't want it,' they say.

"So, I smile and tell them it's necessary for us to get our national debt under control. But they don't believe it."

"Quite," mumbles H.J. Stoneycroft, Droodge's less-than-attentive listener. "These young pups," the old Commons warhorse thinks to himself, "why do they take things so seriously?"

"Then," Droodge goes on, "I'm asked why the government is reducing its payments for long-term care for hospitalized veterans when we're buying a painting by an American artist at \$1.8 million. Especially for a red-and-blue-stripe painting. Why, a

farmer duplicated it in his field just outside Ottawa last week.

"Someone else pointed out that the cost of that so-called work of art was more than the \$1.6 million the government is cutting from women's programs this year, including the federal support for 80 centres for battered women and children. How can I justify that to voters?"

LET EXPERTS JUDGE

At the mention of "voters," Stoneycroft's attention is gained. The florid-faced veteran lurches forward in the chair, his jowls a-quake.

"Indeed, Droodge," he says. "And this morning I heard on the radio H curator from a private gallery suggesting that we politicians are unqualified to judge what art is. 'Leave it to the experts,' she said.

"Well," Stoneycroft continues, uncharacteristically animated now, "I'd suggest curators are un-

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