

Editorial

We can work it out

Yon weekend past would likely be deemed great if; A) You started your weekend on Thursday. B) You are a properly certified visible minority duck or C) You booked passage on Noah's Ark rather than the Titanic.

None of the above applies to this writer who got properly soaked both Saturday and Sunday (in the weather sense) and also learned that Georgetown, like Acton - the veritable hubs of Halton Hills - has residents more concerned with the community as a whole than in particular, themselves as individuals.

In a cliched sense, and to paraphrase numerous comments on the threat to Acton with the possible permanent closure of the Olde Hide House and its associated stores, Georgetown people were saying, "Well, we're all in this together and we can get out of it together." Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner has called a meeting for tonight at the Acton High School Cafetorium to discuss the town's immediate problems and to - hopefully - set out a plan which will ensure its future as a community.

This is to be commended. However, let's hope the meeting doesn't turn into a political rally, with Acton once again relegated to the back burner. To truly define this get together as a meeting to come to terms with Acton's problems, Mr. Turner would have been better advised to send special invitations to Halton North NDP MPP Noel Duignan and representatives from the Town of Halton Hills and Halton Region so that all those who supposedly wield political power - as it relates to Acton - could have their say and then jointly, map out a plan of action.

If tonight's meeting turns out to be merely another partisan political party, then Acton truly is in trouble.

As both the friendlies, and the unfriendlies are aware, I grew up in the small northern Ontario town of Cochrane (pop. 4,500 and declining) - about 700 miles north of here as the polar bear flies.

While Halton Hills is a much larger community in terms of population, we still have that non-derogatory "small-town" feeling which makes this area so special. As opposed to say Oakville, Burlington and yes, even Milton.

We have been hit hard by the recession - which is ongoing, by the way and likely won't top-out for another year or two - more-so than other so-called transient communities.

The reasons are both a blessing and a bane.

Drive to Acton, trek to Ballinafad, sojourn to Limehouse, Glen Williams or Norval and other Halton Hills boonies and you will see historic houses, historic sites and be regaled by stories of third and fourth generation residents.

The majority of us don't want to leave.

By the same token, some of us aren't high school graduates, or college or university material. But these people want to work and live in Halton Hills - near their roots.

It should also be noted very strenuously that these ordinary working people also form the backbone of our community.

They are the charity organization volunteers, the minor sports people, the ones who help organize things like Pioneer Days and the Acton Fall Fair.

They are the core of the community, the strength in the fabric that keeps the garment together.

Politicians at all levels should realize this. Tear the fabric by failing to protect jobs and you are in danger of ripping apart the very community you supposedly represent.

Colin Gibson

The inefficiency of Regional government

To the Editor:

Re: Grass Cutting on Mountainview Road

Most residents of Halton Hills don't really understand the difference between regional roads and local roads. Well, hard as it is to understand, the Region of Halton looks after some of the roads and others are cared for by the Town of Halton Hills. In the Georgetown urban area, three well-traveled roads are cared for by the region. They are Trafalgar Road, Maple Avenue and Mountainview Road.

Don't ask me why these roads were picked, but they were. The Region of Halton fixes these roads, plows them in the winter and cuts the grass in the summer. These roads, I think, demonstrate the inefficiency of Regional government more than anything else.

Which brings me to the point of this letter. Many residents have

probably noticed the hay field that is growing on the northeast side of Mountainview Rd., S. between Sargent Rd. and Sinclair Ave. It seems that due to budget cuts, the region decided not to cut grass on the side of the roads this summer.

You may ask "Why is the grass cut on Sinclair Ave"? Well, dear taxpayer, this grass is cut by the Town of Halton Hills because Sinclair Ave. is a local road. Your next question may be "If the lawnmower is already on the street, why don't they cut Mountainview at the same time?" The simple government answer "That's not our department".

Do you know that if the region does decide to cut the grass, trucks, mowers and workers are dispatched from Milton to do this task. Once again, more government efficiency at work. In the winter time, snow plows dispatched from the Town of Halton Hills Works Yard on

Trafalgar Road are told they don't need to drop their blades on Trafalgar Road and Maple Avenue because they are regional roads and a snow plow from seven miles away will come to plow them.

Tight budgets are here to stay for all governments, they must look carefully where the money is spent and these silly jurisdictional things must be addressed using common sense.

Oh, by the way, Councilor Serjeanston informed me that the grass will be cut using people who have been ordered to do community service as part of their sentencing. I wonder how many regional workers will supervise this endeavor and how many trucks dispatched from Milton will deliver the lawnmowers and gas.

Doug Penrice
Georgetown

New schools! New taxes!

To the Editor:

Re: Don't ding developers" - your editorial of June 17, 1993

While I appreciate the general direction of the above noted editorial, I also think that you have a responsibility to your readers to be fully informed and to present all of the facts.

The Board of Education has no control over development in Halton. However, we do have a duty to educate the students associated with the development and to do that, we must also provide schools.

Halton's policy is that "new development no impact on existing rate payers". Given this policy, it would seem logical that the housing that creates the need for new schools should pay for them.

If educational development charges (lot levies) are not imposed, the cost for new schools will amount to an extra 4 million dollars a year for each and every year in the foreseeable future. This cost will show as tax increases of 1% on all of our tax bills.

There are suggestions that we can find alternatives to building new schools, but the reality is that people don't want their children bussed. For example, look at the White Oaks Community in Oakville.

The choice is a simple one: do we all pay extra taxes every year or do we charge a one-time, up-front fee on the house that is creating the need?

Of course, all of this is now redundant given the most recent court decision on educational development charges. Once again, the province has reduced its participation in capital projects for school boards (new schools) and homeowners will be hit with an extra burden on the property taxes.

Dave Whiting, Trustee
The Halton Board of Education
Georgetown

Don't be intimidated

Hooray for Colin Gibson and his gutsy editorials.

We have in the past lost several of our special journalists. Paul Dorsey, Stuart Johnston and most recently, Dianne Cornish. All of these people gave us in-depth coverage of local and regional affairs in an honest manner. I miss them all.

Here I would add more harm is done by the falseness of trying to please than the honesty of trying to please.

Intelligent people are influenced by intelligent argument and are intimidated by no one.

I feel compelled to express my thanks to Colin Gibson for his editorial "A sign of the times".

In the good old days we elected people to parliament and the legislature because we thought they had the foresight, wisdom and interest in public affairs to make the decisions; they are now either reluctant to make or incapable of making on their own.

Now, the desire to be reelected becomes the chief aim of an incumbent and takes the place of a proper interest in the public good. Politics used to be a public service for token pay and no pension. Now, we have political careerism and huge pensions.

Keep up your good work, Colin and be intimidated by no one.

Dr. Esme A. Ball
Georgetown

NEC report a betrayal

To the Editor:

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists has been strongly critical of the Hearing Officers' Report from the Five-Year Review of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, and recently wrote to the Ministry of Environment and Energy urging him to reject the report.

One of the FON's major concerns was that the Hearing Officers exceeded their mandate by making recommendations for the delegation of the Plan implementation to regional municipalities and counties.

According to the Hearing Officers, "Most larger municipalities have staff capable of administering complex land-use plans." However, staff reports from the Regional Municipality of Niagara and the Regional Municipality of Peel indicate that additional staff would be needed at a cost of as much as \$350,000 in Peel alone. Also, municipalities have stated that they do not have sufficient trained staff to evaluate development applications.

Area municipalities wanting to take control of development sometimes have not acknowledged that the Escarpment is more than a local feature, but is also a natural gift which must be managed in the interest of all Ontarians.

As well as exceeding their authority, the FON believes the Hearing Officers may have failed to exercise professional objectivity and impartiality in their report. They persistently attacked the NEC

for being "partisans for a preservationist viewpoint." Since the purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act is to "provide for the maintenance of the Niagara Escarpment and land in its vicinity substantially as a continuous natural environment," these criticisms illustrate a complete lack of understanding of the function of the Plan and of the Commission. Unlike conventional land use plans, this plan places the onus on development to prove that it will not harm the natural environment.

On the whole, the Hearing Officers recommendations favored those groups with a vested interest in the development of the Escarpment area. They rejected most of the NEC's recommendations which would have more effectively protected the Escarpment's natural values, such as: recommendations to control plans of subdivision in Escarpment Rural areas; recommendations to eliminate pits and quarries as permitted uses within the Plan area; and a recommendation to eliminate golf courses in Escarpment Protection areas.

The report betrays a public trust and must be rejected. Using Niagara Escarpment Commission recommendations as a base, this government must amend the Plan to strengthen, not weaken, its ability to protect the Escarpment landscape.

John Lounds
Executive Director FON
Don Mills

Halton Hills THIS WEEK

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