

Opinion

Halton Hills THIS WEEK

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Crunch time approaching

The dog days of August will soon be upon us and in conjunction with the Farmers Almanac's prediction of a wet month, don't expect many Raes-of-sunshine from our provincially-ruling NDP.

The Aug. 1 NDP-imposed deadline for the settling of the so-called 'social contract' - to slash \$2 billion from the \$43 billion annual public sector payroll - hovers over Ontarians like the dark cloud which used to relentlessly pursue the L'il Abner character, Joe Bfityrsk.

In this instance, however, humor is noticeable by its absence.

According to reports, the Ontario government has issued layoff notices to more than 2,000 workers and Ron Elliot, bargaining team leader of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, claims payroll deductions of 7.6 per cent (\$60 per week on an average annual salary of \$40,000) are already in the system waiting for the dreaded 'doomsday button' to be pushed affecting 88,000 direct government employees. Should the 'button' be activated, the deductions would amount to a government savings of \$90 million, a proverbial drop in the bucket to what Bob Rae demands be achieved.

This is just one sector, however, of eight, which will be affected under the social contract legislation, Bill 48, set to go into affect Aug. 1.

In total, the legislation will directly affect the one million Ontarians who work in the public sector and the after-shocks will reverberate across the province; including Halton Hills.

The town has already suffered the loss of approximately \$250,000 on renege provincial promises for cost-sharing and the hole in the pocket could get bigger as Ontario's financial woes continue to mount.

And mount they undoubtedly will.

When you have one million people unsure of their jobs, (thus their basic security), unsure if retraining will be made available should their jobs be lost, unsure how their lifestyle might be altered, unsure of either wage cuts or wage freezes, that pool of previously disposable income dries up.

In a province of 10 million, when you slice and dice one-tenth of the money-generating population, you can be sure the domino effect will come into play.

Less money for food, for clothing, for housing, for transportation for recreation, etc. - in a nutshell, an economy going into a deep freeze and all of us suffering from chilblains.

Adding injury to insult, the Bobby Rae-gunners expect local governments to play the role of bad guy when it comes to the majority of public sector workers.

Town of Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller appears ready to accept the inevitable; that come hell or high water, Bill 48 will be implemented Aug. 1.

"I can't see Rae backing down now," said Miller in a telephone interview. "If he does, I would think he would have to call an election and I don't think the NDP wants that right now."

Miller said an amicable relationship has been built up over the years between the town and its servicing unions and workers, but can't rule out some job cuts or service cutbacks.

However, he pointed out, trimming has already taken place in a number of areas so the Bill shouldn't have a major impact locally.

He insisted, however, he doesn't foresee a tax hike.

A number of planned projects will be put on the backburner because, as Miller points out, "It's just like in your own home, when you run out of money, what can you do?"

Come the early part of next week, all eyes will be focused on Bob Rae. If he blinks, both he and his party will be a footnote - albeit a rancorous one - in provincial history.

If he carries through with his promises-threats, start buying Christmas gifts and logs for the fire now because it will be a long, cold, hard winter in Ontario.

Colin Gibson

The People's Corner

Ignoring Black Creek is irresponsible

To the Editor:

I am most concerned with your immature trivial treatment of the potential impact of Black Creek by increased development and subsequent additional sewage effluent, as presented in your editorial Wednesday, July 21. Your responsibility to the community as a newspaper editor is to explore issues before the community in an objective and unbiased manner. The editor of a community paper holds a very influential position and has the ability to make his or her views known in a manner unavailable to most. There is an unwritten trust implied with such power and discretion should be the hallmark of your comments.

There are some of your readership base, which sees the environmental impact studies and M.N.R. & M.O.E.E. cautious approach as very refreshing in a world of greed. In the 1990's we are aware of the global implications of environmental failures, and must now recognize that the responsibility begins in our own backyard. The comment

made before the OMB that the M.N.R. should look to Lake Ontario and ignore the Black Creek tributary, is neglecting the fact that Black Creek is part of the greater Southern Ontario watershed system. To ignore Black Creek is to be irresponsible towards Lake Ontario and the watershed as a whole.

In response to the arguments that increased populations in Acton is a good thing, I invite those citizens to drive to Bramalea or Brampton, then take a walk in those built up areas. Do you want Acton to follow that route? Many of us live in Acton, precisely because we do not want to live within a sprawling urban mass.

I suggest that local retailers should look to better pricing and selection as a means of encouraging the present populous to purchase goods in their store instead of loosing (sic) business to the larger urban centres. An increase in population here in Acton will not necessarily increase business if better pricing and product selection is within

in (sic) easy commuting distance (i.e. Guelph, Milton or Georgetown).

James Virgin
Acton

P.S. I trust you have the

journalistic ethics to print my rebuttal without malicious comment or censorship.

Editor's note: In this regard, you are right.

Summer months deadly

By Tim Danter
Special to HHTW

It's that time of year that every young person has been looking forward to. That's right, summer vacation is here. It means that the school yards will be vacant with the exception of day camps and of course, that odd pick-up game of baseball or soccer.

To most of us working folks, that probably doesn't mean anything...or does it? What it represents is that all these youngsters will be out in force playing and just having fun. So, it is our responsibility as drivers to be more cautious. Did you know that almost one-third of all fatal collisions occur during the months of July, August and September? Fifty per cent of these happen on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Last year, 217 people (pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists) were fatally injured. Believe it or not, that was lower than the 248 total for 1991. This would seem to suggest that we are becoming more alert out there. Let's keep these stats on a downward slope.

A few simple suggestions to follow would be:

1. Reduce your speed in residential areas - high speeds should be kept for the highways and freeways.

Guest column

2. Keep your eyes moving from building to building - you'll be able to see pedestrians a lot sooner.

3. Starting up or approaching intersections scan LCR - this will help you to see any cyclists or pedestrians running through it.

4. Cover your brake and/or horn if a pedestrian appears to be too close for comfort or there is any doubtful situation. Don't forget to be aware of what's in your rear view mirror. These are only suggestions, but they do work, believe me. Have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Tim Danter is centre director for Young Drivers of Canada, Oakville branch.

DOWN TOWNER.



It's no good having a photographic mind unless you get it developed.

Historic level of scrutiny

To the Editor:

Last Thursday, the Hide House issued a news release to update the community on the progress of restructuring the company's finances. I am writing this letter, not as an officer of that firm, but as a concerned citizen of Acton.

The high and mighty DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) officials, egged on by meddling members of P.O.W.E.R. are subjecting Acton's growth plans to an arguably historic level of "scrutiny" (obstruction?). Local councillors have warned of the "disastrous" economic consequences of further delaying development, but to no avail. Meanwhile, the time-and-money-burning posturing by the DFO has already prolonged the uncertainty past the point in time where the Hide House could have legitimately included a coming 40 per cent increase in the local population as a premise of its Restructuring Proposal.

So what, everyone knows the Hide House is reliant on tourism anyway, you say? While tourism is, of course, the fundamental business of the company as a whole, certain divisions have become increasingly dependent upon local-area patronage for sustenance; Flight-Line, West Warehouse and Jack Tanner's, in particular.

Would the addition of

3,000 new prospective local customers have allowed Hide House management to save these three divisions by deeming them viable components of the Restructuring Proposal? In the case of West Warehouse, maybe. In the case of Jack Tanner's Table, probably.

Does this mean that the DFO and P.O.W.E.R. may already be partly responsible for the loss of more than 40 local jobs?

Steve Dawkins,
Acton

Got a beef or a comment?

Send your letters to Halton Hills This Week, 232 Guelph St., Unit #9, Georgetown, L7G4B1 or fax them to us at (416) 873-3918



Are the Social Contract talks running out of "bright" ideas?