

Opinion

Halton Hills THIS WEEK

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Social contract - Not!

Welcome to the social contract era in Ontario.

Midnight Aug. 1 (last Sunday) was the deadline for social contract agreements and with Bill 48 - legislation to cut \$2 billion from the \$43 billion annual public sector payroll - swaying in the wind like a spectral hangman's noose, the majority of those workers and unions affected clambered aboard as sailors would into the orphan lifeboat of a sinking ship.

In a classic case of political doublespeak, Ontario Finance Minister (former Pink) Floyd Laughren pronounced the aforementioned NDP backroom brainwave a "done deal" at a press conference Monday.

Then barely pausing to catch a breath, he admitted it may be months before those workers directly affected (approximately 900,000) in the public sector find out whether their jobs have been declared 'surplus', are laid off for an indefinite period of time or face pay cuts.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, local governments (read Halton Hills) have until Aug. 10 to clean up the loose ends and reach agreements with their affected unions and workers.

Then, one would assume, Bill 48, including the 'failsafe' clause, would kick in. This would mean that those workers or unions unable to meet the social contract demands could face government-imposed wage cuts, possible union contract rollbacks and obligatory unpaid days off.

Not really, Laughren, said in an interview.

The government would allow time for local cost-cutting programs to work before jumping in with Bill 48's 'failsafe' clause.

Then, the provincial piggybank guardian offered a verbal slap in the face to recalcitrant workers.

"It's not in their (workers') interest to demand to know how many unpaid days off they may have to take this year.....It would be better for them just to cool their jets." Laughren was quoted as saying.

Now hold the phone here Pinky,.....er Floyd.

If local governments now have at least until Aug. 10 - and perhaps longer - to bring their people under the social contract; if it might take months for those public sector workers affected by the demanded \$2 billion pay slash to find out whether they have to head to the pay window or the UIC window, what the hell was the rush?

And how can you have the gall to tell people uncertain of their financial future to "cool their jets" when it is obvious your government's jets haven't even fired.

Was the much-ballyhooed Aug. 1 social contract deadline a carrot or a kick?

I doubt if even those currently (although somewhat sheepishly) claiming to be NDP supporters know for sure!

To borrow quite liberally from the bard Bill Shakespeare, a misnomer by any other name still stinks.

By definition, social is an adjective, of or pertaining to society or its organizations.

Contract is defined as a formal agreement between two or more parties, esp. one that is legally binding.

Going one step further, we find that an agreement can be defined as the state of being in accord which means: To agree; harmonize. In other words the settling of differences in a mutually acceptable manner.

Do we have agreement with Bill 48? Do we have harmony? Do we have the settling of differences in a mutually acceptable manner?

If this was a quiz or one of the interminable polls used to fill blank space in the major newspapers, one would undoubtedly check the box tabbed, "None of the above".

There is no question that public sector payrolls have to be pared, just as there is no question that Ontarians will have to tighten their belts a bit more in order to - in reality - save our trillion province from bankruptcy.

Having noted that, however, the chaotic and dictatorial manner in which Bob Rae and his cohorts have attempted to ram a solution down Ontarians collective throats rather than truly working constructively with the various sectors involved to set a realistic timetable for clearing up the province's red ink and adjusting lifestyles and expectations, leaves a lot to be desired.

Colin Gibson

The People's Corner

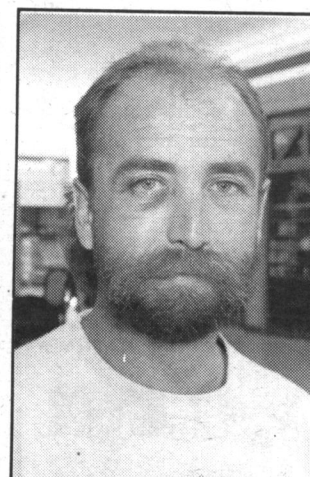
Is Halton Hills tax money well spent?



Margaret Fleet, Georgetown: "Too much money is being focused on roads and I would like to see the tax money spread around to social programs."



Vivian Shaw, Georgetown: "Not enough is being spent on repairing the right roads. More roads should be repaired."



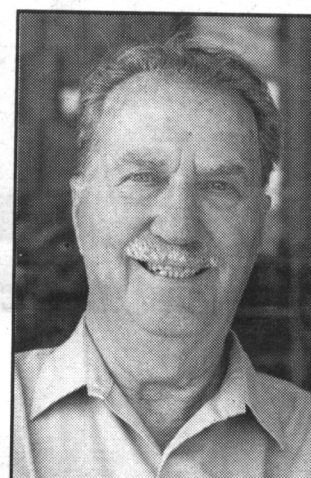
Ian Syme, Georgetown: "I pay too much in taxes towards garbage services for what I get back in return compared to other communities."



Dave Turner, Georgetown: "I think we get our moneys worth. This is a good community, and I have no complaints."



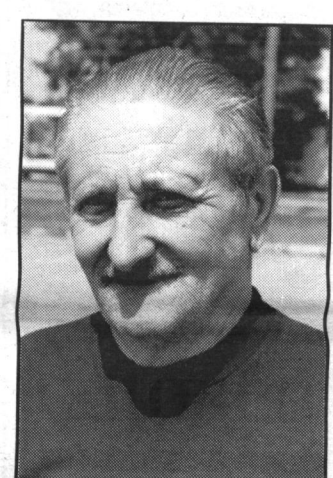
Cindy Gardener, Acton: "I get my money's worth. Everything is pretty good in this community but we need a new arena in Acton."



Fred Hodkin, Acton: "I would like lower taxes like everyone else but I really have nothing to complain about. The upkeep of our community is looking good."



Doreen Gibb, Acton: "No, we are not. We are getting ripped off. Acton's tax dollars are being channeled to Georgetown."



Rudolf Hanousek, Rockwood: "No, I don't get my money's worth. Rural residents are paying more taxes for less services."

Support downtown Georgetown development

To the Editor,

The article appearing in your paper last week on downtown Georgetown development greatly disturbs me. I have been in business in downtown Georgetown for nine years and it has been good, very good. However, times have changed in Georgetown (as everywhere else), especially in the downtown core. We need the development downtown, and we need it NOW.

There are those who would oppose any changes to the downtown core, these

people want us to remain a quaint country town, with little or no thought for how the businesses will survive.

Many of these same people do not even shop downtown, or locally for that matter. They spend their dollars elsewhere and are proud of it. This much-needed development in the downtown will create jobs and it will also boost the businesses downtown. I too wish to retain the identity and character of our downtown, but I do not wish to see empty stores and our Main Street becoming a sort

of ghost town.

Look at small towns across Ontario - many of their downtowns are boarded-up and businesses have relocated elsewhere. We are very fortunate to have a unique downtown area with a great variety of shops and businesses. We all want to survive.

I urge people to support development downtown. Call your councillors, write letters. But above all, please

support us in our desire to develop and grow and help us to survive. We do not need any more strip malls or shopping malls period. We have a new mall in Georgetown which is great. There is room for both of us.

Support your downtown businesses. Shop locally and support the development in downtown Georgetown.

Elizabeth McNeilly, Elizabeth's Fashions, Main St., Georgetown

Student centre closes

To the Editor:

On Thursday, July 29, the Canada Employment Centre for Students closed its doors for 1993. It has been a productive summer, as the centre managed to help over 200 students in the Halton Hills area find summer jobs (full time, part time and temporary). The student centre would like to thank local employers, householders and the community for their support throughout the summer. The centre would also like to thank Halton Hills This Week for its consistent coverage of events and services.

The staff of the Georgetown Canada Employment Centre for Students.

Letters Welcomed

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request.

Halton Hills This Week reserves the right to edit, revise, or reject any letters on the basis of factual errors, punctuation, spelling errors or as a result of space limitations.

Send your letter to:

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