

EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



Regional government: Failure or success

We're on the threshold of observing 20 years of regional government in the old County of Halton.

Remember? In 1974 the experts at Queen's Park planned to reduce the number of Ontario municipalities by joining town and country in unholy wedlock. With 20 years under our belts maybe it's time to review whether we should celebrate or regret the disruption.

In Halton, for instance, the five urban municipalities were reduced to four and the four rural townships completely absorbed them. That left Oakville and Burlington on Lake Ontario, Milton straddling the centre, and the new Town of Halton Hills sharing the top half of the new Region with a portion of an unwieldy Milton.

To emphasize the importance of the change, Halton named a Region with new responsibilities for sewers, water, garbage and policing, once the preserve of each individual municipality.

The architect of change was Chatham's gift to Ontario, the Hon. Darcy McKeough, minister of municipal affairs. McKeough was inclined to the right wing of the Tory party at a time when Premier Bill Davis was dubbed a "Red Tory." It needed someone like the no-nonsense McKeough to steer the government ship through the stormy waters of change.

There were difficulties, especially in north Halton where McKeough's skill at cartography was challenged by Nassagaweya's feisty reeve, Ann McArthur. Queen's Park's original intent was to carve the township in two, the lower half of it to be absorbed by Milton, the upper (northern) part awarded to Acton or to a new town composed of Acton, Georgetown and Esquesing townships. Mrs. McArthur, no rookie politician, said no way. It's all — or nothing at all!

The government's determination folded when it looked like the whole regional deck of cards in Halton would fall. Queen's Park gave in and Nassagaweya was handed to Milton on a Thanksgiving platter. It was done with full knowledge that north of 15 Sideroad Nassagaweya's interest in Milton faded. The farther north the less interest.

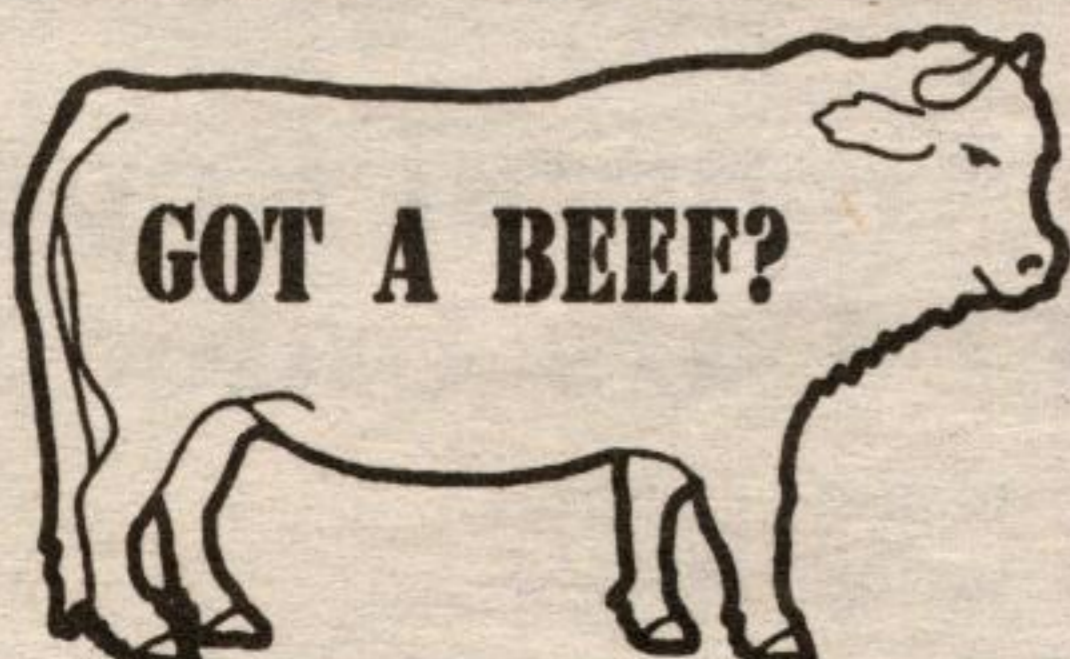
To ease the pain of losing the northern half of Nassagaweya and its assessment, Queen's Park decided that a new town of the north would stretch clear down to 401 Hwy. with all its commercial possibilities. A separate Acton identity was discarded and this town was allied with Georgetown and Esquesing into what became Halton Hills. It was a shotgun wedding but also a typical Canadian compromise.

Some Actonites detested it. Others welcomed it as a gate into new prosperity as traditional industries folded up or moved away. The dominant fear was that Acton's interests would be lost with only three representatives in a 13 person Halton Hills council dominated by Georgetown councillors and Esquesing representatives with close ties to Georgetown.

Some think that fear has been realized. Frank Bean, former chairman of the Region of Peel, shares that view. Regional government is working, he declared, but Acton got the short end of the stick. Reared in this town, Bean knew what he was talking about.

Others contend we would have been much worse off if the town had been left to its own devices, especially with the loss of industrial assessment.

With almost 20 years of regional government under our belts maybe it's time we took a look at its successes and failures especially as it pertains to Acton. That's what we'll attempt to do over the next couple of weeks.



Write a letter to the Editor!

Send or bring it to our office at 12 Church St. E.
or fax us at 853-5040.



LETTERS

Participation limited

To the Editor

Another Remembrance Day has come and gone, and once again, in spite of the best efforts of our local Royal Canadian Legion, the children of Acton's public schools have been denied the opportunity to participate in the poster, poetry

and essay contest.

Two classes at McKenzie-Smith school were encouraged by their teachers to submit entries — otherwise all the Acton entries would have been from St. Joseph's school, where the children were encouraged to enter the contest by their teachers.

Thank you, St. Joseph's teachers and children — you have learned something of Canada's history from your research into your projects, and have shown good citizenship by your interest.

*Renee Watson
Tidey Avenue*

POWER is 7

To the Editor,

It's hard to believe, but POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources) is approaching our seventh year in the battle to defeat the Acton Quarry Landfill proposal.

Our job hasn't always been easy, nor without controversy, but speaking as someone who has been involved over the entire course or those seven years, I can honestly say that all of our decisions have been made with the strong belief that the actions we take are in the best interests of our defense against this landfill proposal.

Our battle, however, is far from over. RSI, despite an initial hearing ruling that cited gross inadequacies with the process followed in their original application, has decided to further pursue the issue, by reapplying for a new hearing. This hearing is likely to reconvene in the very near future.

More information on this is contained in our fall newsletter, which has just gone out to all past and

present members.

Thanks to all who have sent in their membership renewals, and a special thanks to the many people who added financial donations as well. If you haven't already, please, we need your renewal, or your membership if you are interested in joining POWER.

On Wednesday, Dec. 1, at 8 pm POWER's Annual General Meeting will be held at the Georgetown High School cafeteria. Our guest speaker will be Paul Muldoon from Pollution Probe. At this time, we will also be electing our board of directors, who will guide POWER through the all-important next year.

Our 12-member board of directors meets bi-weekly, and is at the centre of the decision making process of our group. If you are a current member of POWER and would like to have an input into what we do, please consider joining our board and give me a call at 853-1328 before Nov. 25.

*Ruth French
POWER*

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