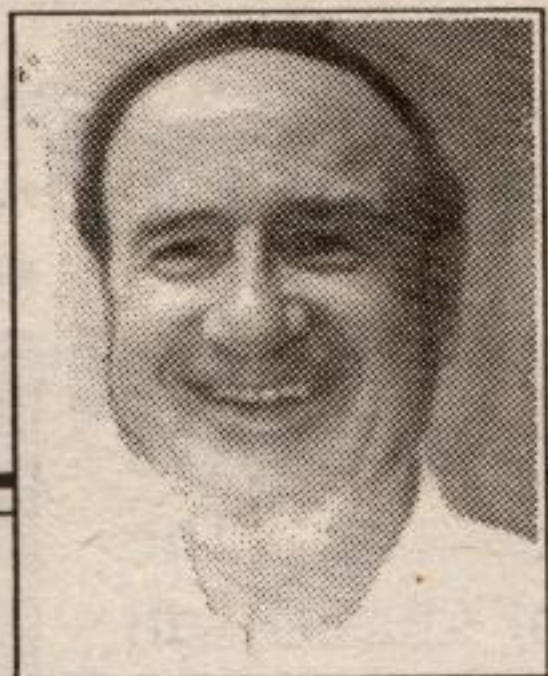


## EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



### 'Action' group has an alternative to whining

The new *Action for Acton* committee, formed by a group of Acton business people and concerned residents, has their work cut out for them. Meeting since January to examine the "depressed" state of this community's economy, the group is attracting a lot of interest because they want to do something about the empty stores and fewer shoppers in Acton, instead of whining and complaining.

It's a daunting task in a town where significant growth has only been permitted in Georgetown, which is also the location for a relatively new indoor mall. The mall, with its one-stop shopping and easy parking, has been a magnet for shoppers within a wide radius, including Acton. The pull for shoppers is compounded by the presence of two large malls in Guelph, a scant 20-minute drive west.

Shoppers don't necessarily patronize malls outside Acton because prices are better or parking is easier. It's part of the 20th century phenomena of shopping for fun, or rest and relaxation. It's because there is a greater variety of goods from which to choose and the indoor facilities are not subject to the vagaries of the weather.

The latter has been particularly significant this last winter, one of the worst, if not *the worst*, in living memory. Few shoppers, especially the elderly, wanted to brave frigid temperatures, icy streets and knee-deep snow in the downtown area when they could jump in their cars and shop in temperature-controlled malls. The result was a particularly distressing year for some businesses which depend on pedestrian traffic for a good part of their customers.

Another factor was the closing of the olde Hide House and its subsidiary stores. The ripple effect from the many out-of-town patrons who shopped in "quaint" Acton stores after trips to the bigger tourist attractions was significant. The Hide House subsequently reopened, but on a smaller scale, and Fred Dawkins started a new Wool Combing business in the store vacated by West Wearhouse, but the FlightLine store in the heart of the downtown still is empty. It's possible it will become a refuge for senior citizens soon but a retail store would probably have helped downtown business more.

It's also a matter of perception. While some complain, others have been busy renovating and doing something to attract back the old and generate new business. The banks have undergone extensive renovations, the Bank of Montreal the most recent. The attractive IGA plaza is a magnet for thousands of shoppers who appreciate the proximity of good shopping facilities, proving that if there are attractive stores and easy access to them, the shoppers will come.

The task facing *Action for Acton*, then, is to attract new business with up-to-date facilities and throw off the pessimism that has hampered growth. Retailers can attract people with programs designed to attract people downtown.

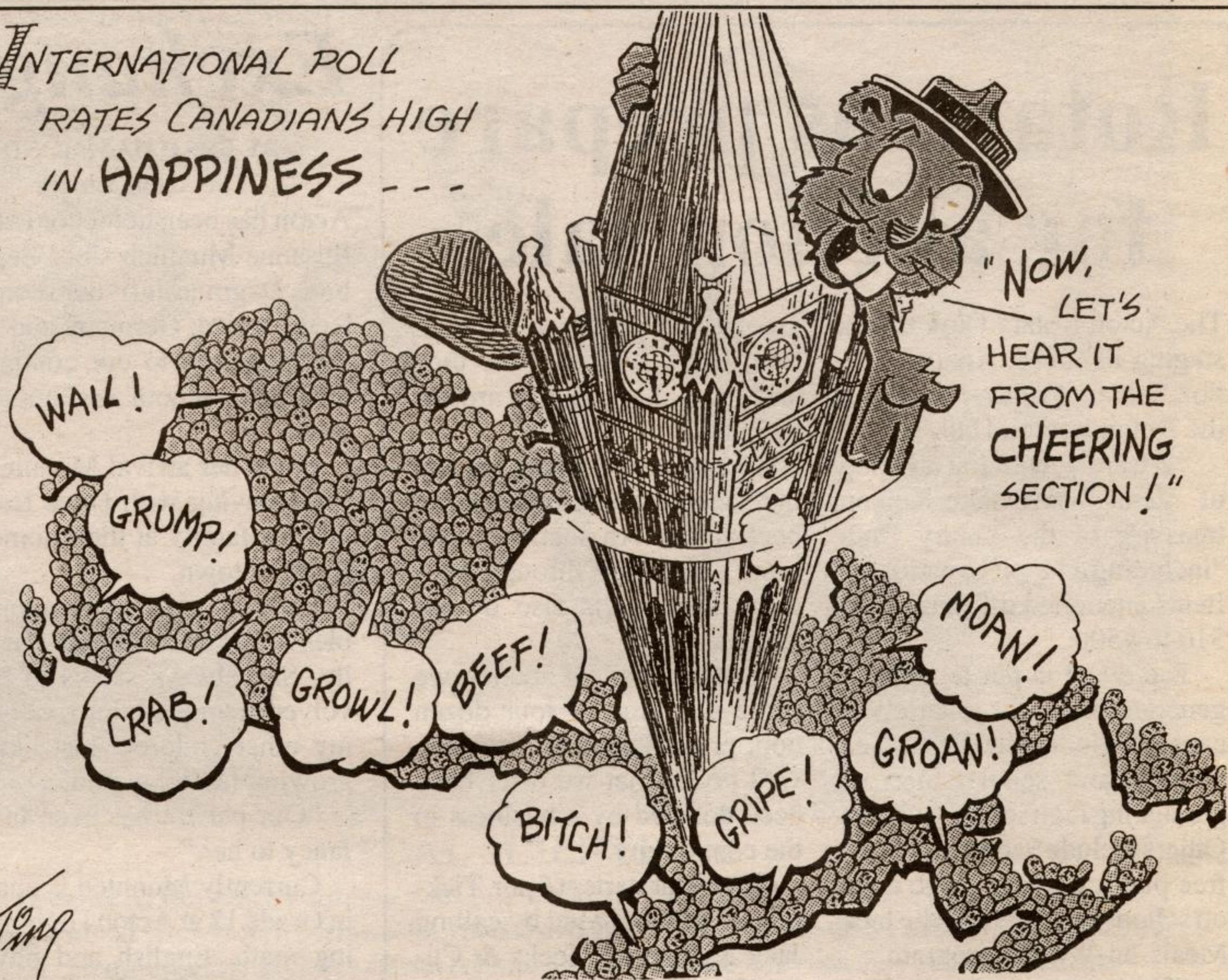
Above all it needs everyone to pull together to make the downtown a pleasant shopping experience. Peeling paint needs to be replaced, weeds growing alongside businesses need control, decaying storefronts need repair, streets all over town need to be free of debris and dirt. There are eyesores downtown such as old garages which should be torn down, loungers need to be discouraged from blocking the sidewalks and littering discouraged by enforcing the by-laws.

Unfortunately, the downtown is at the juncture of Hwys. 25 and 7, which generate huge volumes of traffic. There are pedestrian crossovers but Actonites, like people in most small towns, like to jaywalk. There's nothing we can do about traffic volume except petition the Ministry of Transportation to get busy on a bypass — and use the crosswalks.

These are just a few of the tasks facing the *Action for Acton* committee, none of them insurmountable but all time-consuming and often complex when dealing with out-of-town property owners. The good thing is that the problem has been recognized and the enthusiasm for change and progress has been infectious.

Let's all help them as much as we can to make Acton an even more pleasant and desirable place to live.

INTERNATIONAL POLL  
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## LETTERS

### Don't fail children

To the Editor,

One of the basic rights of being a Canadian citizen is the right to public education. The public education system in Ontario used to be one of the finest in the world, but with budget cutbacks and increased expectations of what the system should provide, Ontario students no longer compare as favourably with students around the world.

We all understand how difficult the past few years have been for the Province from an economic standpoint. Indeed, these years have been equally as difficult for our individual economies. Our household budgets don't amount to millions of dollars, but we face increased costs, reduced services, reduced income and uncertain futures, just as the Province does. With that in mind, we cannot

understand your government's insistence in implementing Junior Kindergarten province-wide by 1997. While local school boards are forced to cut necessary programs to keep tax increases to 0%, your mandate to implement J.K. seems particularly irresponsible.

Our opinions on the value and necessity for Junior Kindergarten may differ, but we are united in our resolve that at this time taxpayers simply cannot afford the enormous expense of starting and running J.K. In Halton Region alone the cost is estimated to exceed \$13.2 million.

Schools need books and paper and pencils and excellent teachers and resource teachers, and now computers and software packages if they are to teach children the skills they will need to be productive, creative confident adults. If we can't afford to do that already, it would be financially irresponsible and socially unacceptable to put further strain on the system.

Our children are our most valuable resource and our hope for the future. We can't afford to fail them.

Actively Involved Parents,  
M.Z. Bennett Public School

## WHAT'S HAPPENING!

A Weekly Round-Up of Coming Events in Acton & Area

**April 22, Friday** — Registration for Acton Library's "Gifts In Bloom" P.A. Day program on May 6. Participants must be in Kindergarten or older. Fee only \$5. For info call 873-2681.

**April 23, Saturday** — 9 am to 3 pm: Red Cross CPR course at Knox Church. For info call the Red Cross: 877-5233.

**April 23, Saturday** — Wastewise Celebrates Earth Day at 36 Armstrong Ave. in Georgetown. Activities include craft making for kids, comedy with Steve Donahue and an Earth Day address from Diane van de Valk. Have an environment-safe day!

**April 26, Tuesday** — 8 pm: The Christian Social Justice Action Group of Acton is holding a discussion session on euthanasia and a Christian response to it at Bethel Christian Reformed Church. For more information call John at 853-3090.

**April 27, Wednesday** — 7 to 10 pm: Volunteers Working Together Workshop. This workshop will be held at the Acton High School. For info call 873-2600 ext. 276.

**April 27, Wednesday** — 6:30 to 8 pm: Acton Co-Op Nursery School Open House at M.Z. Bennett. Register now for fall classes. For further information, please call 853-1159.

**April 29, Friday** — 7:30 pm: Spring Festival of Music at Knox Presbyterian Church. Enjoy music by the Salvation Sounds, operatic tenor Ken Mitchell and the Presbyterian Junior Choir. For further info please call Inez at 853-4757.

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