

EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



MPP deserves our thanks for Bill 62

Many of us don't hesitate to criticize politicians for inaction or stupidity on issues of current concern. It's only fair then to compliment them when they do their job well and perform above expectations.

Residents of Halton Hills have good reason to congratulate and thank local MPP Noel Duignan for spear-heading a private member's bill (Bill 62) through the Ontario Legislature, which bans landfill sites on the Niagara Escarpment. Few private member's bills ever make it through the intricacies of provincial parliament. This one passed third reading by a comfortable margin.

It obviously took some adroit lobbying by Mr. Duignan to obtain the political support needed for a measure which made obvious sense to residents of this town. We owe him a debt of gratitude.

Think of the energy and money expended over the last decade to fight the proposed dump at the Acton quarry on the Third Line. Although the United Nations declared the Escarpment a protected area and the imposition of a landfill site could have threatened the purity of the water supply for thousands, the quarry owners continued to pursue their objective of turning the huge worked-out quarry into a huge dump.

Obviously the quarry owners and their agents, RSI of Rockwood, were disappointed at the passage of Bill 62. They fought for years to impose a dump at the quarry despite the determined opposition of POWER and a resolute public. It's possible they could further pursue that objective in the courts because they have spent considerable amounts of money in their gamble to establish a landfill site when the quarry was mined out. The passage of Bill 62 has pretty well guaranteed the dice will not roll in their favour.

It's hard to feel sorry for the company. Think back a few years when quarry owners, anxious to have the municipality approve extending the quarry and moving part of the Third Line, filled Council with visions of golf courses, pretty parks and small lakes when reclamation of the quarry took place. These visions vanished when the profit motive for dump sites beckoned. That big dustbin in the Niagara Escarpment looked like a dream come true.

You may recall, back in the '70s, when the Hon. George Kerr, then Minister of the Environment, told the municipality they'd literally have fiscal rocks in their head for turning down a proposal to dump Toronto's garbage in that limestone pit. Naturally, George lived a long way from the site — in Burlington. He envisioned trainloads of baled bundles being transported to the quarry railway siding and piled neatly in the worked-out pit.

Fortunately, officials then knew about the 'thin edge of the wedge' theory. They turned it down flat. If persistence is a virtue, then the quarry owners must be given full marks. They continued to nurse their dump dream.

Mounting opposition, both political and public, the formation of POWER as a vehicle to fight the dump proposal, and the increasing anxiety about escaping leachate poisoning the water supply, galvanized political action and Noel Duignan's Bill 62.

Tonight (Wednesday) POWER is throwing a big party at Andrew's Scenic Acres to celebrate passage of the bill. I'm sure they've invited Noel Duignan.



LETTERS

Parent clarifies her concerns

To the Editor,

I am writing this letter to help clear up any misunderstanding regarding the M.Z. Bennett Grade 5 trip to Rocky Ridge Ranch on April 25-27.

Allan Cunneynworth wrote a letter to you last week, expressing his outrage at the recent article in your June 15 issue entitled "Parent's Concern Prompts Change." I am that parent. This was not "one isolated incident which was reconciled immediately" as Cunneynworth stated.

Because of my daughter Lindsay's allergies, I had to deliver her food to Rocky Ridge Ranch and happened to see the sleeping accommodations given to her group.

My father, Roy Lindsay (a past member of The Ontario Fire Prevention Association) and I were appalled at the condition of this lean-to (approximately 7' x 15') with its only available access through a narrow alleyway behind another cabin; a smoke detector with no battery in a "dead air" space; many nails sticking 1 1/2" to 2" out of the wall by the bunk beds; and a big piece of broken glass on one bed.

We spoke to the staff who said it was an oversight. I returned to speak to Lynn Snider (Principal at M.Z. Bennett P.S.) who went out to the ranch. He called me to say the group had been moved to another location.

Another parent of a girl in this group, Debbie Douglas and I were appalled to see that this group was to sleep in an INTERIOR room, with NO windows and only one door, in the Chapel building.

The smoke detector was once again in a "dead air" space; access to the room was to be through a

back workshop entrance where there was a can of solvent and a pail of rags next to two furnaces (also shelves of paint cans near the furnaces); no emergency lighting nor exit signs over the doors in the building. If there had been a fire they would have been trapped.

We took our daughters home to sleep and returned them for the day programs.

Upon speaking to a fire inspector in the Milton Fire Department, we found out that the fire department did not realize Rocky Ridge Ranch existed — if there had been a fire, they would have sent out one fire truck to deal with one home and up to four people — NOT the 44 Grade 5 students, 20 high school students, 2 teachers and the overnight volunteers.

Milton fire department sent out someone to inspect the ranch. The inspector said the ranch was okay but he did not inspect the rooms in question. It was only after I contacted The Ontario Fire Marshal that his office had the Milton Fire Chief do a complete investigation (which took place the week of June 15).

The interior room will no longer be used for sleeping quarters; the solvent, rags and paint have been moved away from the furnace area; the bunk beds in the cabins are no longer directly against the baseboard heaters; the lean-to has been fixed up.

Since this has come out in the open, the Halton Board of Education is making up a NEW procedure to ensure the safety of the places that students are being sent. Up until now, this was not done. The teachers, school and the Board assumed that this place had been checked out because it has been operating as a camp for many years.

I do not care how nice a place is — if it is not safe then it should not operate. Do not assume your children will be safe — check out where you are sending them, in person.

Laurie Lima,
Acton Boulevard

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THE ACTON TANNER is published weekly on Wednesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. at 12 Church St., E., Acton, Ontario, L7J 1K4. Mailing address: P.O. Box 150, Acton, Ont., L7J 2M3. Telephone: 519-853-5100. Fax: 853-5040. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

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