

## ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



### Important questions

Many Acton parents are wrestling with the problem of whether or not to register their children for Junior Kindergarten in the fall. I spoke to an "expert" to get her thoughts on this issue. She is both a mother of a 3-year-old, and a Senior Kindergarten teacher. She asks some important questions as she, too, grapples with this issue.

*"As a mother, I have to consider my daughter's emotional well-being first. How does she relate to other adults? How does she relate to large groups of children? How easily does she adapt to new situations? Does she need me very much for emotional support in new situations? How well did she adjust to pre-school this year? How does she respond to change? Answers to these questions may help me make a decision.*

*"I must also consider my daughter's self-esteem. Is my child shy with new children? With new adults? Will she freely speak in a new situation or tend to hold back her ideas? Can she stand up for herself when faced against others?*

*"I need to look at physical factors as well. Is my child going to feel too small in a large school? She may be mixed, in some situations, with 10- and 11-year-olds. Perhaps 12- and 13-year-olds. Will this intimidate her and cause her to become afraid, or scar her personality in a any way?*

*"What are her toilet training habits? How confident is she using toilet facilities without me, in places other than home? Will there be a small-sized washroom right in the classroom, or will she need to walk through the halls to use the washrooms that the older children use?*

*"It is important for me to consider the J.K. program. Since it will be a new program, I need to decide if I want my child to be a 'guinea pig.' The teachers will be warm, loving and dedicated, but are they experienced with this age group?*

*"And the biggest question — what will the numbers be? In pre-school the ratio is 1:5 adults to children. In J.K. she may be in a 1:20 ratio or more. Can she handle these numbers when getting her snow suit on, telling her stories, or sitting for a story? And will she be mixed with S.K. children, who may be two years older than her?*

*"As an S.K. teacher I see the difficulties some children in my class are having adjusting to school.*

*"Generally, S.K. children are very tired in September and October. Things like morning announcements and bells going off often unnerve the children I teach. Fire drills are really scary.*

*"My students spend a lot of time thinking about recess and snack. If they are hungry earlier, can they eat or do they have to wait?*

*"Many of my S.K. children cry and miss their parents in Sept. and even Oct. I often have a child sitting on my knee as I try to teach the whole class.*

*"Readiness to go to school does not depend on whether a child can print their own name, recite the alphabet or count to 10. A shy child may know the entire alphabet but never let me know, because he is not comfortable talking to new adults.*

*"When a supply teacher covers for me, either for illness or to provide my planning time, I worry about a new adult being in the room and hope it can always be the same person. Things can happen with a new adult in the room, just because they do not know the sensitivities of each child, as I do.*

*"I am not against J.K. necessarily, but I am against forcing school on a child who is not ready for it. There are many children who would benefit from waiting an extra year before starting S.K. let alone J.K. And there are children who are ready for school at age 3 or 4.*

*"It is also important to actually see the school, the principal, the classroom and the teacher.*

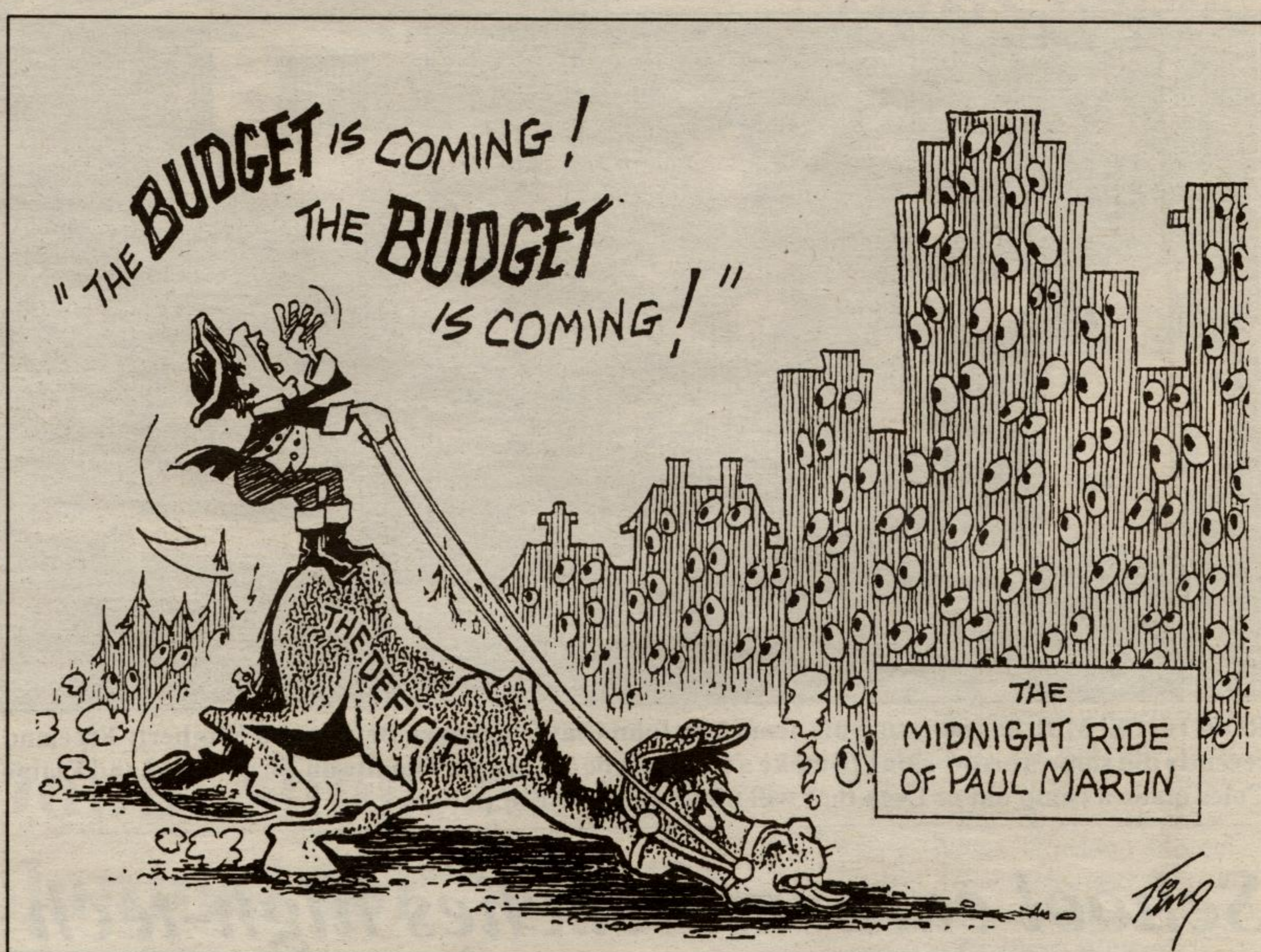
*"Most often the memories we have of school are those of our own Kindergarten year. It is important that these years provide positive experiences for our children."*

In addition to these important comments from my "expert," some parents need to think about busing — are you comfortable putting your 3-year-old on a bus with 11, 12, and 13-year-olds?

And for those parents in the M.Z. Bennett community, you should also consider that M.Z. will link with McKenzie-Smith next year. While I know the teachers at both schools to be excellent — you will have a hard time finding a more caring, dedicated, and innovative group of educators — the 1995-96 school year will be a transition year for everyone.

It is most important to remember that both Junior and Senior Kindergarten are optional. Parents should not feel pressured, one way or the other, when making this important decision.

You know your child best!



## Space Invaders session at Acton Band Hall

Caring for young children in a home environment is both a demanding and a fulfilling career. Balancing the needs of your own children with those of your daycare children can be the challenge of the day.

Children's Services Division of Halton has planned free monthly networking sessions open to all persons providing child care in a home, not just those registered with the Region or in an agency.

A network session is scheduled for Tuesday, March 7 from 7:30 to 9:30 pm at the Acton Parent-Child Resource Centre, 85 Wallace St. (the Band Hall).

Titled "Space Invaders: Child Care and Sibling Rivalry," the session will feature "well-qualified" speaker Linda Rivard, who will discuss the challenges of keeping everyone happy when you combine family life with your home child care business.

"The concept of the Rivalry workshop came directly from input from home care providers," reports Roxanne Young of Children's Services.

To register for the session call Jo Parkinson at 853-0501, ext. 7175. For further information, contact Marian Williamson at 905-336-7289.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING!

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

**Feb. 22, Wednesday — 7:30 pm:** The North Halton Cultural Awareness Council will meet in the Community Room of the Halton Regional Police office, at 217 Guelph St., Georgetown. Share your thoughts about racial harmony in our community! Call Elizabeth at 853-2911 for info.

**Feb. 25, Saturday and March 2, Thursday — 9 am to noon (Sat.), 6:30 to 9 pm (Thurs.):** These are the days to register for soccer at the Acton Arena. Fees are: \$65 for one player; \$110 for two in a family; \$150 for three in a family; \$80 for adults wishing to play.

**Feb. 26, Sunday — 11 am:** Rev. John Anderson will take part in the church service at Knox Presbyterian Church. Special services commemorating Knox's 150th anniversary are planned for several weeks.

**Feb. 28, Tuesday — 6 pm:** It's Shrove Tuesday at St. Alban's Parish Hall. Enjoy a pancake supper at the church: adults, \$4; under 12, \$2; toddlers, free.

**March 2, Tuesday — 7:30 to 9:30 pm:** Linda Rivard will speak about "Space Invaders: Child Care and Sibling Rivalry" at the Acton Parent-Child Resource Centre. This networking session is free to child care providers and parents in and around Acton. Call the Centre at 853-2574 for details.

**March 3, Friday — 7:30 pm:** Acton will hold its World Day of Prayer service at the Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle, 33 Churchill Rd. N. This year's theme — The Earth is a House for All People. Guest speaker, Mary Farrow. Nursery will be provided. All Acton churches are participating. Plan to come and join in worship.

**March 4 and 5, Saturday and Sunday — 9 am to 4 pm (Sat.), 9 am to 1 pm (Sun.):** Learn first aid and CPR, taught under Heart and Stroke Foundation standards. St. John Ambulance offers classes at the old school in Norval, on Mary Street behind the used car sales lot on Hwy. 7. Call Yvon at 853-4889 or David at 877-1045.

**March 20, 22, 27 and 29, Mondays and Wednesdays — 6:30 to 9:30 pm:** St. John Ambulance is offering winter courses in first aid and CPR at the old school in Norval, Hwy. 7. We teach under Heart and Stroke Foundation standards. Don't forget, "we can help." Call Yvon Essiembre at 853-4889. And coming soon, baby sitting courses!

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