

ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



Don't forget to vote!

With the election for a public school board trustee less than a week away, voters in Wards 1 and 2 should have a lot on their minds right now.

The field is large, with eight candidates coming forward to contest the position. In many ways, the large number makes our decision more difficult.

Education is an issue that is very dear to me, and should be to all of you too. Even if you don't have children in the system right now, it should matter what goes on in school.

From an economic standpoint, 60 per cent of your municipal tax bill goes to education. The rest comes from Provincial grants, which in turn comes out of your provincial sales and income taxes. None of us wants to pay more taxes.

Roughly 80 per cent of the education budget is spent on wages, which are largely controlled by union contracts. Our trustee will have a difficult time deciding where cuts can be made. And all eight have stated they believe cuts must be made.

Some trustees have proposed user-fees for optional programs. Design and tech, family studies, French immersion, Junior Kindergarten and instrumental music programs are considered optional. Some have proposed cutting these same programs as a cost-saving measure.

I have three children attending public school, and last year I paid well over \$500, over and above what I paid in taxes, to the school for book clubs, music books, class trips, fund-raisers, school T-shirts and special lunches.

In some cases I received a product, which I still have, and in every case my children received educational value for my money, but I feel this has already become a user-pay system.

Children over the age of 6 *must* go to school of some description – that's the law. Even those who choose to home-school their children have strict guidelines they must follow.

We want our children to come out of the system able to read, write, do math and hold a job. We want them to be law-abiding citizens who have respect for the law, enough ambition to make a good life for themselves, a sense of community, pride and self-respect.

If we care so much about the product of education, we have to care what goes on inside the school. We owe it to ourselves and to our children to keep current.

Wards 1 and 2 have been without a trustee for almost five months. In that time the fate of Junior Kindergarten, next year's budget and the M.Z. Bennett-McKenzie-Smith link have been on the Board's agenda. Acton and area have not had a voice on these important issues.

The all-candidates meeting earlier this month provided an opportunity to meet the candidates and hear what they had to say. If you missed the meeting, you should pay close attention to the literature that comes to your door, talk to your neighbours, read the newspaper, or give the candidates a call.

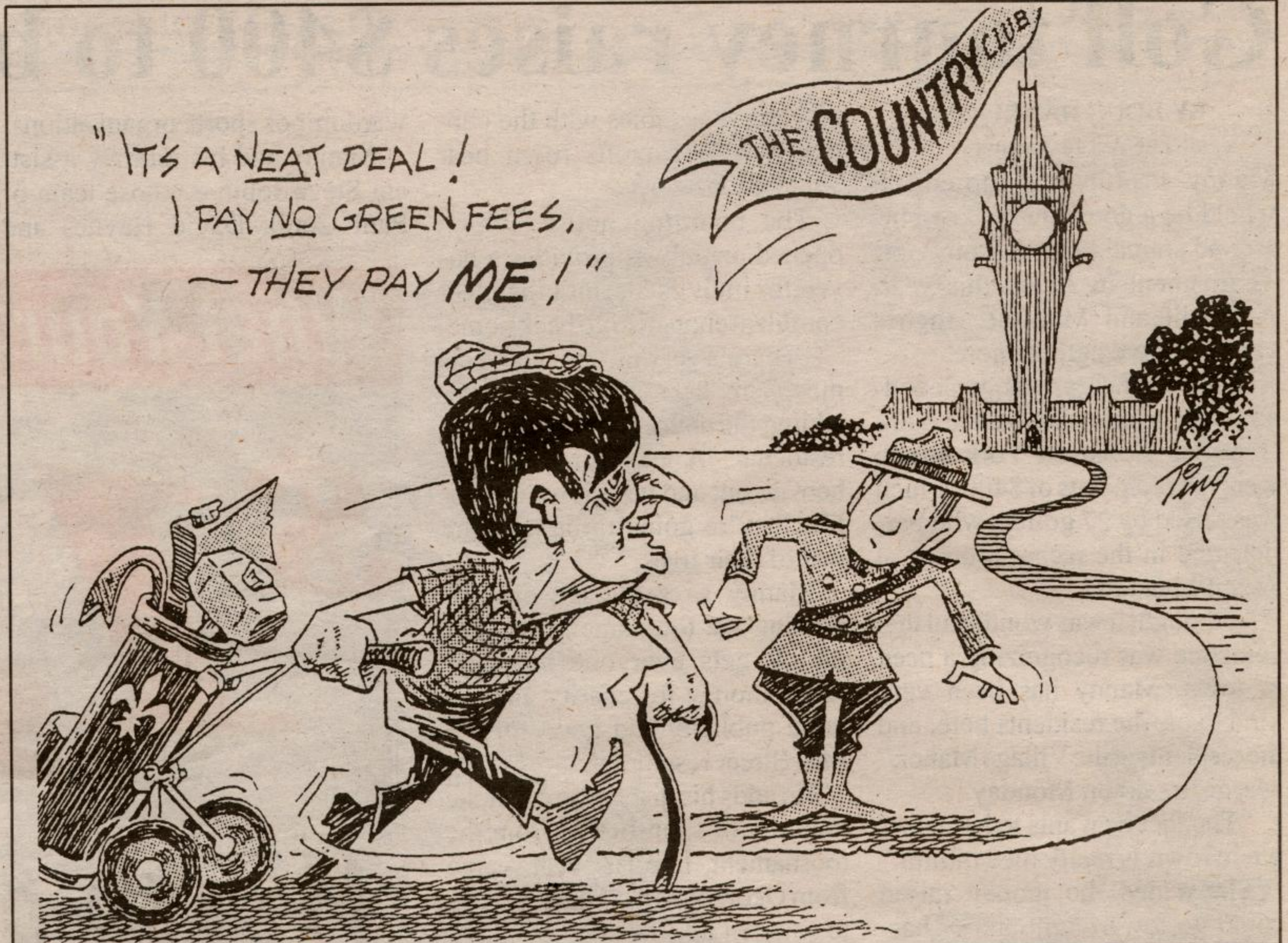
We need a strong voice at the Halton Board of Education. We need someone to represent us as education reaches a cross-roads.

You need to vote on Oct. 23.

Acton's Kathy Knowles will be one of the featured speakers at Saturday's 100th anniversary open house at the Georgetown Public Library.

Kathy's presentation will start at 2:30 in the children's area of the library; she will share some of her experiences from working in a children's library in Ghana.

There is a full program of events from 1 to 4 at Acton's "sister" library. Call 873-2681 for details.



LETTERS

Tory cuts hurt

To the Editor,

(Re: *The Way I See It*, by columnist Mike O'Leary, Oct. 4.)

We hear from economists that we can't continue to let the debt grow more quickly than the nation's wealth. Those of us who manage even a simple household budget can understand that.

The responsibilities for the head of any family are to first make sure their members have a safe place to live, are properly fed and clothed, have access to health services and are given opportunities to learn and grow – to be responsible and caring citizens.

As Canadians we can be proud these things have been available to all. But with the Harris cuts to social services will come economic disparity and social disintegration.

The underprivileged will soon become invisible and the privileged won't even have to think about them. Leaving the needy without support is, to say the least, un-Canadian.

Government needs to show the taxpayer it is willing to maintain

honour within its ranks, that it is not a 'me first' government.

But it's still happening! Tory patronage – will it never end? Ethics are not part of the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution!

The appointments of Dan MacDonald, Maeve Quaid and Evelyn Dodds, and the \$15 million given away to business by cutting the \$50 filing fee, which over 300,000 corporations pay to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Affairs, are just a few examples.

I think we all have enough common sense to know we have to do with less, but not at the expense of the vulnerable.

The first priority of government should be to create jobs, which in turn increases revenues, not axe social programs. Social service workers are on a four-day week, cutting 20 per cent from their pay. What happens when these jobs are lost as a result of budget cuts? Fewer dollars going to the tax base, and more unemployment!

Priorities need to change, not responsibilities.

I have faxed MP Chudleigh and Mike Harris and have yet to hear from either one. I guess if you dare disagree with Tory policy, you just don't rate a response.

Or maybe it's because I'm a woman.

*Freda Paterson
Campbellville*

Ankle bracelets?

To the Editor,

It appears that Canadian lawmakers are trying to outdo one another in silliness!

We have gun laws, obviously meant to prevent a gun from jumping into someone's hand, pointing itself at a person and forcing a finger to pull its trigger.

We have hate laws which suggest that if we are going to beat up or kill someone, we should pick a

white, English-speaking, heterosexual male victim.

Now we hear a proposal that electronic ankle bracelets may replace restraining orders against potential wife killers.

A more effective replacement for restraining orders might be a choke-chain on a short leash.

If the animal then continues to menace, perhaps a lethal injection!

*Eileen Hutcheson
Knox Street*

'Pigeon' thanks

To the Editor,

On behalf of the Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, I would like to thank Country Reflections for the generous donation of the decorative gift basket and Mulligan's Grill for the luncheon-for-two, donated as prizes at

our second annual Pigeon Race, held at the Acton Fall Fair.

It is great to see the support afforded the Acton Branch by the local businesses, organizations and committees.

Once again, thank you all very much.

*Pat Kentner, publicity
Canadian Cancer Society*

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