

EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



Monster in our yard

Recent cuts to the Niagara Escarpment Commission's budget and changes being made to the Land Use Protection Act, which may affect the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), have raised the concerns on the escarpment's future. Since the Escarpment climbs through Halton Hills like a giant dinosaur, its protection against ambitious entrepreneurs creates more concern here.

Our concern for the Escarpment, which traces its 725 km length from Queenston to Tobermory, has also emanated from attempts by quarry operators to turn the mined-out quarry, 2 km south of Acton, into a landfill site, aimed primarily at the Toronto market. Despite setbacks from the Province and this municipality, Reclamation Systems Inc. (RSI) has doggedly pursued their intent to fill the cavernous hole on the south side of Region Road 43 with garbage.

The situation was exacerbated recently when local environmentalist Rita Landry discovered that United Aggregates Limited (UAL) had never been given a development permit for the expansion of the quarry to the south side of Regional Road 43 and had already proceeded with mining it. She took the matter to court in a private suit against UAL for continuing to quarry without the development permit the Ontario Court of Appeal said was necessary.

Since about 35 per cent of the aggregate used in the Greater Toronto area originates from the Escarpment, and a large part of that from the Acton quarry, her prosecution in the courts created considerable dismay to UAL. Mrs. Landry's vigorous opposition to desecration of the Escarpment has won her few friends among moderates but surely no one doubts her devotion to this cause.

Whether the company thought they could proceed with quarrying on the strength of their permits for the north side of the road, or whether they just decided to go ahead with it, is moot. Perhaps they were just negligent, assuming they had a right to all that rock. This writer suspects it may be a little bit of all that.

It becomes doubly suspicious when the Ministry of Environment and Energy proposed an amendment which would exempt quarries within the control area, licensed before 1975, from obtaining development permits for future quarrying. It appears the quarry people have some friends in very high places.

It must have been brought to the attention of MPP Ted Chudleigh very forcibly. Last week, in an articulate statement outlining the processes developed to protect the Escarpment, he noted he is committed to making sure the Escarpment is protected. "As a resident in this community, I have a vested interest in protecting this tremendously valuable ecosystem," he declared.

"A shrinking NEC does not equal less protection for the Niagara Escarpment. In the end all government would still be guided by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and have to conform to its requirements when making development decisions."

The problem with that statement is that amendments to the Plan, such as that proposed by the Ministry, would soon neuter it. Quarry operators operating since 1975 would almost have carte blanche.

When dealing with the Escarpment, we have to keep in mind two things. One is the quarries provide employment for many people at a time when good jobs are scarce and there is a need for aggregate. Two, the Escarpment, a unique geological formation, must be protected against those who would despoil it without regard to the environment and for their own interests.

Some say lining the pits with tough vinyl and installing drains would make these dumps fool-proof from leaking leachate. Never mind the other road and traffic problems, what if the darn thing did spring a leak? The porous limestone would pose a threat to Georgetown's water supply, and probably Milton's as well.

Who would answer to that down the road? Surely it is time we got this monster off our backs.

Same time last year ...

Rockwood's Mike Hudson signs up to play for the Toronto Maple Leafs ... Susan McPhail-Job, Gary Crosbie and Elly Tuitman announce candidacy for vacant Acton trustee seat on the Halton Board of Education ... Larry and Roxanne Jennings begin work as the new captains of the Salvation Army.

As you can see by this diagram...
It's really a two tiered operation
where we make a small incision
here on your posterior and simply
remove and drain this lump here.

Hey wait a minute Doc....
That lump you're pointing at
is MY WALLET!



Your LETTERS

MP defends plan

To the Editor,

Canada is admired the world over for its willingness and ability to provide a decent level of retirement support for our seniors. As a result of our pension system, today's seniors enjoy a standard of living substantially higher than that of the previous generation. It is our obligation to take the necessary steps to safeguard this accomplishment for our children. We must take the necessary actions to ensure that the pension system is sustainable and will be there for future generations.

The government has proposed a new Seniors Benefit, which would take effect in 2001 as part of its commitment to ensure the sustainability of the system. It will be completely tax free and will incorporate existing age and pension income tax credits. Above all, the Seniors Benefit is designed to help those who need it most. It is designed to fully protect low and modest income Canadians, almost all of whom will receive slightly more. Those who receive GIS will get \$120 more per year. Fully 75 per cent of single seniors and couples will receive the same or higher benefits. Nine out of 10 single senior women will be better off under the new system.

In the Opinion article of Aug. 21 ("Seniors taxed twice"), Garth Turner was quoted as stating that seniors will begin to face double taxation with incomes over \$26,000 under the new system. In fact, seniors with yearly incomes of \$40,000 will be protected and many will receive higher benefits. Those with incomes over \$45,000 will generally receive lower benefits. The very highest income seniors who already have secure pensions and other income, will receive no assistance. For single seniors with incomes over

\$52,000 and couples making above \$78,000, benefits will be eliminated.

The Seniors Benefit will make the public pension system more affordable and sustainable by targeting seniors who need help the most and slowing the rate of growth of public pensions, making them more affordable for future generations.

The writer of this article suggests we make a distinction between responsible and irresponsible seniors. It is true many people make sacrifices to ensure they will be comfortable in old age but does that mean we are unwilling to help those in need? It is also true many families earned modest incomes through all of their working lives and had much less disposable income than others. Does the writer suggest these are the irresponsible seniors?

Our pension system was developed on the premise that all citizens would be guaranteed a basic income. Abuse of the system should and will be dealt with but this surely doesn't mean we should neglect our poor just so nobody touches our money. Canada is known as a country of tolerance and compassion. As long as I am the Member for this constituency I feel it is my duty to give these premises full expression. I must stand with our seniors who are most in need regardless of Garth Turner's terror-filled statement.

Julian Reed, MP
Halton Peel

[Ed. note: The opinion piece referred to, while quoting Garth Turner, was not written by Garth Turner.]

SOMETHING BUGGING YOU?



Write a letter to the Editor!
Deadline is Monday at noon.

THE ACTON TANNER

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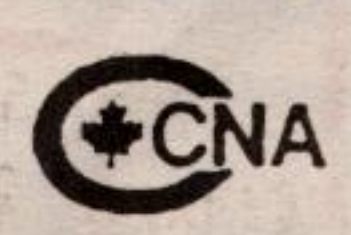
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PHONE:
519-853-5100

FAX:
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