

Town budget committee urged to 'regroup, refocus, revitalize'

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Town councillors have been asked to keep in mind the three Rs when they begin deliberations on this year's budgets.

Not the usual reduce, reuse and recycle, but three Rs for tough, uncertain times — regroup, refocus and revitalize.

As members of the budget committee met for their first briefing last week acting Administrator Janet Lunn Stewart suggested that the old saying that the only things that are certain in life are death and taxes should be amended.

"For those of us in municipal government, I submit to you that there is a third certainty and that is the certainty of change," Lunn Stewart said.

"The irony is that so often the nature, pace and impact of change is so very uncertain. This will never be more apparent than during this round of budget deliberations," Lunn Stewart said.

"However, I respectfully submit to budget committee that 1998 needs to be a year in which we pause, regroup, refocus and revitalize," Lunn Stewart said.

While several major planning initiatives should be continued Lunn Stewart sug-

gested that with a new council and an ongoing search for a new town administrator that consideration should be given to a brief deferral of discretionary initiatives.

"The dust has yet to settle with respect to the implications of provincial downloading and the new property assessment system — these details have not been finalized," Stewart said.

"I realize that is yet another budget dilemma, another balancing act to put to budget committee... yet any tangible or intangible consideration respecting your corporate work plan and your staff, will be truly appreciated and will realize constructive outcomes," Lunn Stewart said.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette said it was too soon to say whether or not he would support a tax increase or push to hold the line.

"This is probably one of the biggest years of transition and it would be premature to say if I think that it (any tax increase) should be zero or one per cent."

Acton Councillor Norm

Elliott said he wanted to wait until he knows what the province is doing, not saying, before saying yes or no to a tax increase.

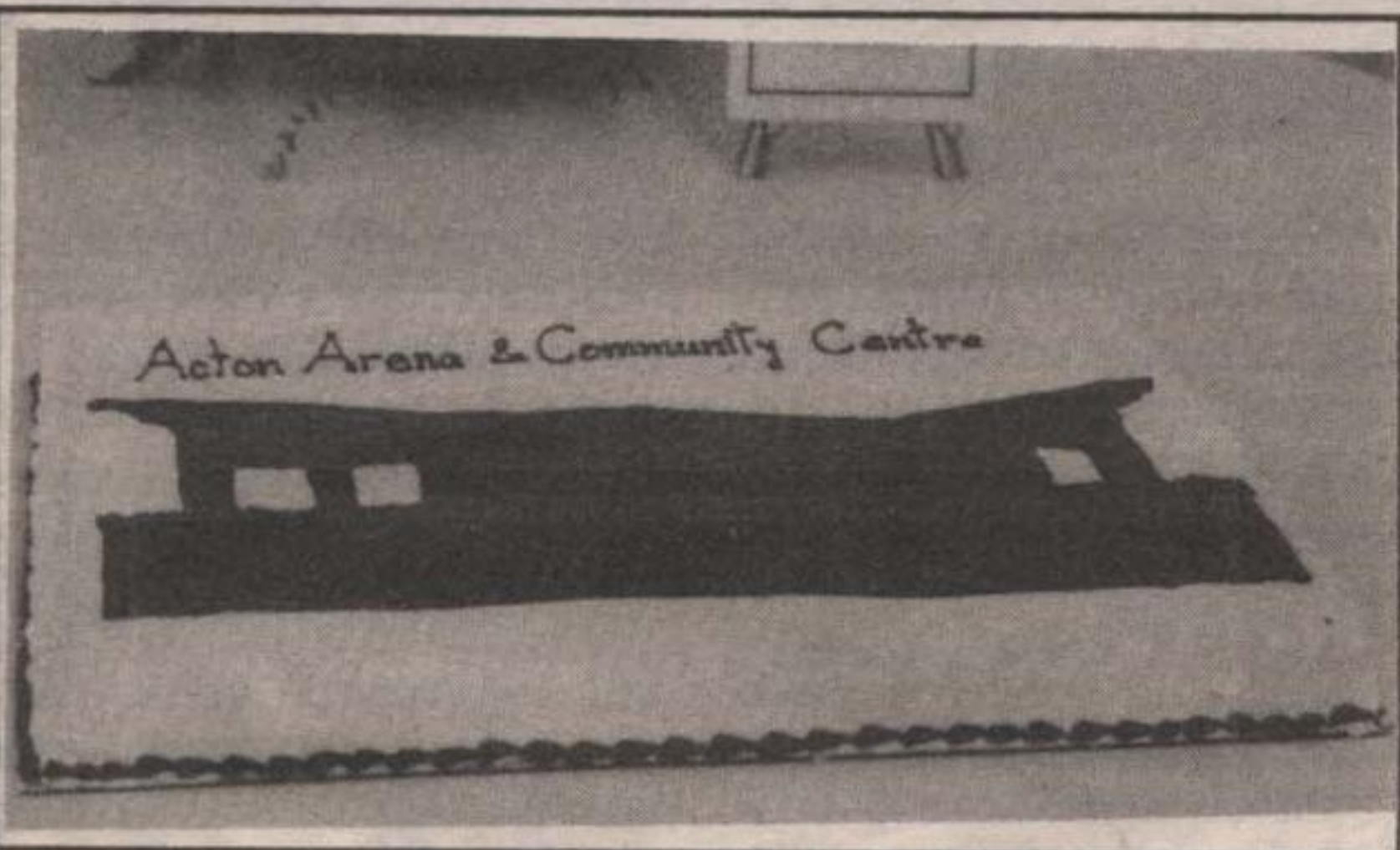
"We've had a half-a-per cent tax increase over the past six years. Inflation has gone up 14 per cent. Most intelligent people in the community would know that that's a trend that can't be continued so, somewhere

along the line we give up something or bite the bullet," Elliott said.

Following the meeting Councillor Clark Somerville echoed his colleagues's comments, adding that, "in a year like this there are too many unknowns to say now what budget decisions we may make. Let's get down to work," Somerville said."



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