

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Messy streets

Visitors to Acton over the weekend must have wondered why there was so much litter fouling the downtown. Warm weather which has brought smiles to many faces has also exposed garbage and all sorts of litter hidden under snow and ice. In fact, it looked like the streets had not been swept in months.



Not only litter but several buildings have layers of pigeon poop along the sidewalks, gooey noxious stuff that can turn your stomach. It doesn't add much ambience of the downtown for shoppers. Adding to the unsightly mess was the accumulation of sand along sidewalks and gutters. And some alleyways leading to Mill Street were litter-and garbage-strewn as well.

Worst of all it looked like some of the business was oblivious to it all. Not so, though. The BIA has been notified and they have hired someone to sweep and keep the streets clean starting next week. They'll have their work cut out for them.

The downtown core is, comparatively speaking, the living room of the community. When it looks messy and dirty it reflects on the appearance of the whole town.

Visitors, tourists, anyone passing through certainly aren't going to be impressed. Depressed maybe, by the sight of so much litter.

At one time it was incumbent on every business place to keep the premises clean and tidy. That included sweeping and cleaning the sidewalk and gutter along the establishment. Those who did not cooperate felt the wrath of the majority.

Most of the shopkeepers still keep their places clean and tidy but there are some who are negligent and it unfortunately reflects on everyone.

In most cases a cleanup would simply be a matter of sweeping and shoveling the litter and pigeon poop into garbage bags. It is not an expensive proposition. All that's required is a broom and shovel and some good old-fashioned effort.

Of course, you're right, it was the general public, which caused much of the litter in the first place. They threw their litter and garbage on the street instead of placing it in the boxes provided. It's an offence to litter but many of us apparently don't care a fig.

If we're going to have a town we can be proud of it is incumbent for all of us to help keep the streets clean and free of litter. Not only for visitors but for our own satisfaction as well.

Has spring sprung?

The first robins were already frolicking in back yards, chirping their familiar cheery-cheery-chee-oh from stark maples and birches before February gave way to March. Except for some random piles of the white stuff most of the snow had melted. Crocuses and hyacinths stuck tentative heads out of winter beds testing the air for warmth.

Old timers, memories weathered by decades of weather watching, warned: Don't be fooled, if March comes in like a lamb it'll likely go out like a lion. Don't take your red flannels off yet.

Who cares, said those who already were celebrating the rites of Spring. Wintry blasts may still funnel their way down from the north and send us back to the fire but even the calendar says Spring can not be far behind.

Indeed it is only a scant two weeks before the vernal equinox, which heralds the official arrival of spring on the calendar. March 20 is the day, only 24 hours after the swallows return to Capistrano. In this neck of the woods the robins and red winged blackbirds are the harbingers. And they are here.

Poets have eulogized for centuries of the arrival of spring. Perhaps no one has caught its essence more than Robert Browning. He declared:

*The year's at the spring
And day's at morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's a dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!*



GOOSE-STEPPIN': Balmy temperatures and slowly receding ice are heralding spring for these Canada geese who checked out the open water on Fairy Lake on the weekend. — Frances Niblock photo

Bureaucracy strikes again

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**
The New Tanner

Bureaucracy never ceases to amaze me.

I thought my dear house had put me through all the hoops it could when its sale was scheduled to close last Friday.

I was wrong.

The day before the closing, when I went to sign the final papers and hand over the keys, I was informed I still needed a final house inspection by the town building department. Our eight-year-old building permit had never been closed.

At the time we did it, I did know about moving in without an occupancy permit. Somehow when help to move became available it seemed more important to use it than to get that paper first since I was living in a 19-foot house trailer in January blizzards with a man recovering from major surgery.

We did plan to get the permit, but we just never got around to it. Indeed, I forgot I didn't have it until my buyers' lawyer pointed it out.

Since my buyers just had the place gone over by a home inspector I wasn't very worried. I knew it needed caulking around windows and doors but you don't do that in February anyway and we all knew it.

Seems someone forgot to tell the building inspector.

He also complained I need four more inches of headroom on my basement stairs. He suggested I cut the offending opening bigger by hacking four inches out of the headers. I suppose I could but with my luck someone - probably him - will then tell me I've threatened the integrity of those joists and they need to be replaced. No hatchet job. I'm having new basement stairs built instead.

Then there was a matter of insulating the back wall of the basement.

Serves me right for not finishing what we started. I think the rules changed over those eight years because I'm sure you didn't have to do that sort of insulating back then.

Since it's a walkout basement the entire wall is above grade and the rules call for installing insulation to two feet below grade. My heart was in my throat while he assured me I didn't need to break up the floor and add fiberglass right down the side of the foundation. Just floor to ceiling will do nicely.

Then there was a matter of extra permits for the rec room and sewing room in the basement as well as the storage loft in the garage. The need for permits for the two rooms was no surprise. We hadn't planned on these rooms originally because we didn't need the extra taxes. But when kids came home in desperation after being downsized ... well, you don't turn them out. But the storage loft?

If I stuck hooks in the garage ceiling they wouldn't charge me. Because we put up a steel beam on two posts and a joist at the back wall so we could put plywood on it, suddenly it's an addition to the house?

I also got warned against storing anything heavy on it. It could hold up a barn dance - if you didn't hit your head on the garage ceiling - but I need to be cautious about the weight of aluminum lawn chairs.

Then the plumbing inspector showed up. Seems there are two basement drains that need glued-on ABS caps. One already has a cap glued down but it's the wrong kind of plastic. I'm supposed to take that off and replace it.

He forgot to mention how I'm to do that. Besides, if I glue them shut, the only way to ever use these drains in future will be to call a plumber and install new tops. Now do I have a suspicious mind or is that the whole idea?

Enroute to get my building permits I visited my buyers' lawyer to

drop off the report. He apparently had some naive notion I was coming to beg or something. He started in telling me how terrible it was that we had no occupancy permit. We really had no right to be living in the house., blah, blah, blah.

Us short people have short fuses too. Remember Jackie Gleason's favourite line about "to the moon, Alice"? That lawyer doesn't know how close he came. Even the building inspector assured me there's nothing unsafe about the house. (The steam clouds coming from my ears were probably worrying him a little.). If this legal twit thought he could con me into dropping the price just because he's a lawyer he doesn't realize how many court cases I covered or what I learned about lawyers in the process.

Then I went to order my insulation and discovered another nasty note. If the new owners ever want to finish the rest of the basement, their first task will be to rip down the insulation I had to install. You can't strap over it without puncturing the vapour barrier - another no-no, according to the rules.

A friend and I spent a day blowing nails into the wall with a hand-operated hammer gun and whacking our skulls on the crawl space as we installed the darn stuff. but it's up there. Now it's Paul and Sherry's problem.

My realtor had the right answer but most people would be afraid to use it. The lawyer works for his clients. If they wanted to buy it the way it was he should butt out. Now he has forced them into extra expenses for things they will only have to undo later.

I'm just frustrated at the delay. No matter the buyer the process and costs are the same for me. I just wonder if Paul and Sherry will realize who to blame when the time comes for the renovations they tell me they plan?



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