

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Tax burden heavier?

Have you got your tax bill yet?

Those who have and found a large tax increase are "mad and confused" as a headline in The New Tanner noted last week. Those who were awarded a drop in taxes, the minority, are glad they escaped the taxman's wrath.

The shift in the tax burden is the result of Queen's Park policies on downloading, reassessment and the impact of the Town's budget. Town Treasurer Andy Koopmans says the tax increases are due to a shift in the tax burden to residential properties, not because of any Town budget increase.

Provincial reassessment hit 58 per cent of urban Acton residential property owners, some of them really hard, like 10 or 12 per cent. Some higher. Over 50 per cent of Acton's commercial properties will pay higher taxes because of reassessment while 42 per cent will pay less.

Taking the increases and decreases together it represents only a 4.27 per cent increase for residential properties in Acton and 4.7 per cent for rural homes. However, these percentages mean nothing to those suddenly confronted with massive tax increases from \$250 to \$1,000 or more. Averages may make better reading but they don't ease the pain for those with huge increases, or even mediocre ones.

We've contended all along that the 30 per cent saving in provincial income tax the present government trumpeted as a great tax saver would show up somewhere else. Obviously those with increases found it in their town tax bills.

Downloading, provincial, regional or municipal, really just shoves the burden further down the line of responsibility. When it is accompanied by a cut in services, hospital closings and teachers' strikes it does nothing to inspire confidence in the present government at Queen's park.

Maybe it is too early to see the end result of all the cost cutting, downloading and reassessment. But really what does a 30 per cent cut in provincial income tax matter if the money saved goes to increased local taxes, bigger assessment and a cut in hospital, medical services and drug services? Not much from this corner.

Of course, the situation changes for each individual taxpayer. Those (42 per cent) who pay less taxes may almost break even - or better. But it does seem there are tremendous inequities in the system.

If you have concerns take them up with the assessment office and if you are not satisfied then this corner suggests you take them to our MPP Ted Chudleigh. His government is the mastermind behind all his shuffling.

## Congratulations!

You might have needed a shoe horn at times to squeeze more people into the Acton Fall Fair over the weekend. Beautiful hot, muggy weather favoured the Fair over the three days and crowds jammed into Prospect Park to create new attendance and box office records.

The midway, one of, or the best, ever to set down at the park, was busy from the time it started Friday afternoon until Sunday evening, with some sleep time in between. Most other events including Friday's arena show were very well attended. Cattle, horse and poultry classes seemed to have lots of entries and that perennial favourite, the children's petting zoo, was again a major attraction.

The homecraft display in the arena was again outstanding, laid out attractively and an eye opener for those who never realized the talent in town and district.

All of this doesn't just happen. It takes the combined effort of everyone from President Ron White to those who clean up after the event to make the Fair a success. This year's was outstanding. Congratulations.



**FOX FANS:** Although Terry Fox was dead long before they were born, students at McKenzie-Smith Bennett school, including Mrs. Graham's Grade 8 class, raised \$213.54 for the Acton Terry Fox run during a fun day on Thursday at the school. - Frances Niblock photo

## Cat traps – keep 'em inside!

BY MAGGIE  
PETRUSHEVSKY  
The New Tanner

Why is it that common sense flies out the window so quickly over pets?

I have been a cat lover for more years than I care to admit yet the idea of losing my cat to a cat trapping program is shocking.

The notion your neighbours might shoot your cat if you don't keep it at home, out of flower beds and kids' sand boxes I understand quite well and even sympathize with to some degree, but trapping?

Having listened to town councils in various municipalities argue over trying to licence cats, I was under the mistaken impression stray cats could not be legally hunted or confined. Their legal advisors always based this opinion on some old Common Law about cats' value in vermin control - probably dating back to the time of the Black Death.

Given that background I admit the Humane Society's letter in last week's New Tanner was a surprise. I suppose Mr. Burr's assertion they aren't working in secret is true. But if the public is generally unaware of what's going on, that's the same as secret, isn't it, even if it is all unintentional.

I also have to wonder if the trapped animals are disposed of or sold for use in experiments the way dogs can be?

Of course, I am also a firm believer in keeping my cat inside. If the mice want to eat the tulip bulbs, so be it. That's no worse than slugs or other grubs eating them. I turn the cat loose in the garage so he can pick off any mice or chipmunks thinking of moving indoors, but outdoors is rodent domain.

The Tanner received calls from several cat owners over the summer complaining about missing animals and questioning whether someone

was rounding them up for some purpose. At the time I thought the notion a bit odd but warned them how many cats were disappearing in Guelph thanks to coydogs and coyotes or whatever mixture of breeds are roaming the outskirts of the city.

I suspected much the same here since most of these people were near the edge of town and conveniently located for picking off by our version of the same problem. Burr says they have only taken six cats out of this area so maybe there is a predatory canine problem here after all.

Burr says feral cats tend to suffer terribly from lice, fleas and assorted other ailments. I remember our barn cats were always on the loose and I don't remember a one of them ever being terribly scruffy, let alone covered in lice, fleas, etcetera. They got no grooming, no vet checks and no food beyond a dish of milk twice a day to be shared between the 10 or more of them. They weren't feral in that they did accept human presence,

but they sure didn't get any great care or attention.

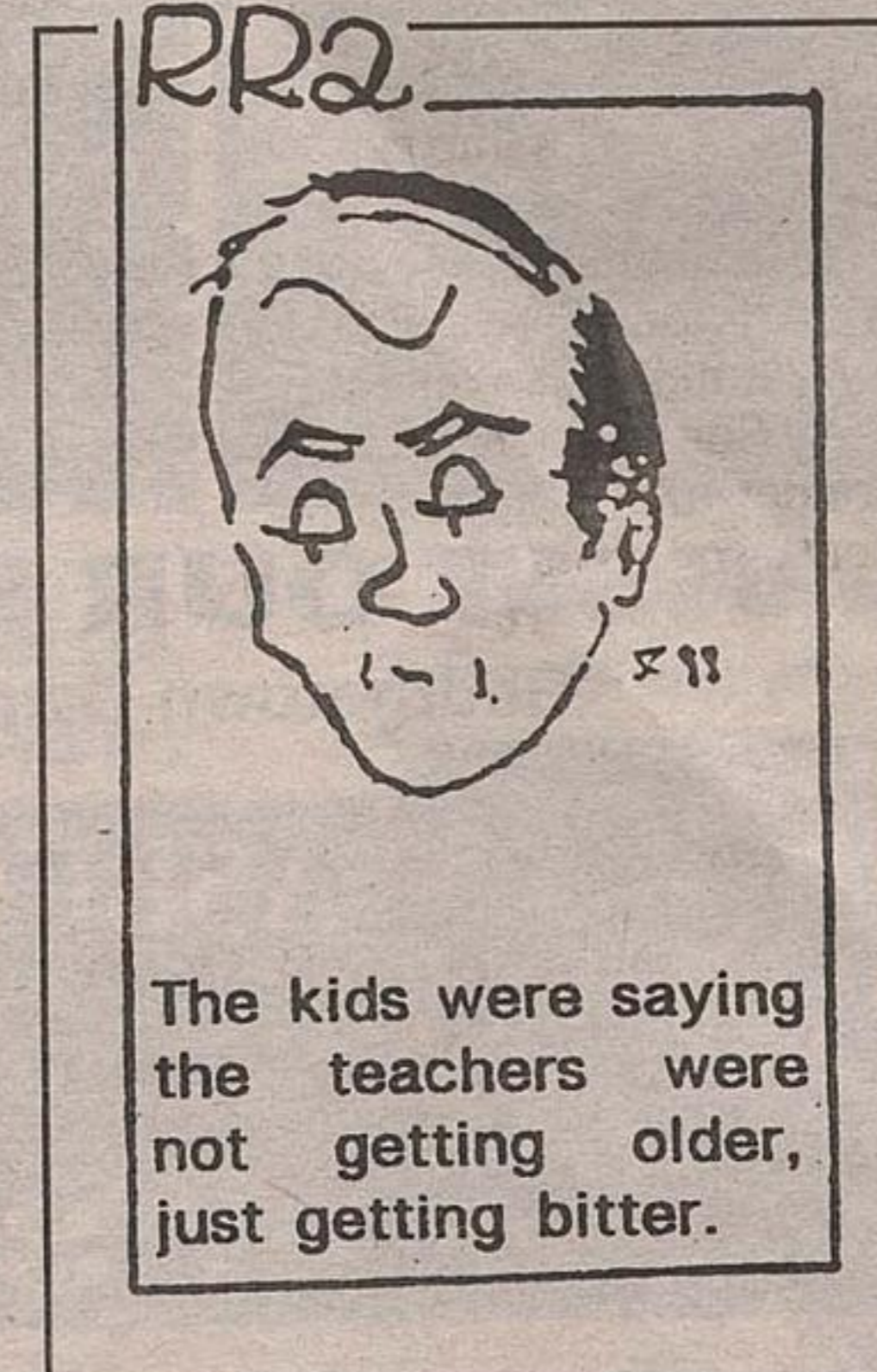
Whether you like to believe it, vets tell me and experience seems to back them up, cats - like people, only react to fleas if they are allergic to them. I am extremely allergic to all these little stinging, biting varmints from mosquitoes on down and every bite I get takes weeks to stop itching, let alone actually heal up.

When we had a problem, I discovered my cat scratches a bit and chases them down but he never comes up in lumps or shows any sign he's been bitten. My daughter's cat, by contrast, would come up in great sores and howl when she was scratching. Since we were in the same house at the time it was obvious the difference was in the cats, not the fleas.

If that's the case, then why should insects be any more of a problem with feral cats than with domestic or barn cats?

A story I recently noticed in another newspaper says the trick to keeping feral cat colonies healthy is to control their fertility. If their populations are stable so that they aren't starving, other ailments, notably feline AIDS and whatever the feline equivalent is to HIV, apparently is not a major problem. Burr mentioned the same program in his letter but concentrated on the misery these animals endure with insect pests. My concern would be more for rabies and assorted communicable diseases which could be passed to my house cat if he came in contact with one of these wild ones.

My real conclusion has to be more a question of why are either the Humane Society or area residents getting excited? If we've only had six feral cats to trap in a couple of years, we really don't have a major feral cat problem. And if you're concerned about the health and safety of your pet, KEEP IT INSIDE!



The kids were saying  
the teachers were  
not getting older,  
just getting bitter.



# Tanner

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