

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Vandalism and loiterers

Vandalism is rampant in Acton and it's likely to get worse as the weather gets warmer. It's not just something peculiar to Acton. It's a problem in neighbouring communities, too. Rockwood experienced a rash of it during March break and there's plenty of it in Georgetown and Milton as well.

In Acton's case it was on the agenda at the last meeting of the Business Improvement Area (BIA). Members are concerned at the extent of the vandalism and loitering in the downtown area where teens and older youths congregate. One businessman noted he had been vandalized three times and no arrests had been made.

In the discussion some members of the BIA thought a teen curfew might curb the vandals. It was suggested youth might be banned from the streets from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. as one answer to the senseless damage inflicted on community property.

Halton Police Detective Sergeant Jackie Gordon said she understands the frustration of business owners but maintains it is up to the store owners bothered by intimidating loiterers to press trespassing charges and be willing to go to court over them. She says the problem is really boredom and better recreational and transportation systems are what is needed to curb loitering and vandalism.

Of course, business owners know that retaliation by vandals is not unknown and are reluctant to press charges. They feel it's up to the police to move the loiterers and keep the streets for the public. At one time when Acton had six constables on duty it was possible. With only a village constable on duty through the day and cruisers available on call the same resources are not there.

A curfew?

When this scribbler was growing up in Acton there was a curfew at 9 p.m. for everyone under 16 years of age. They had to be off the street by then unless accompanied by their parents. It worked reasonably well but, of course, the one constable then simply couldn't patrol all the streets even in a village of 2,000 souls. For teens under 16 who didn't have adequate parental supervision - and there were some then, too - it was a game of hide-and-seek with the constable.

We're all for better recreational and transportation facilities to ease the problem. But unless this community has a million dollar sugar daddy neither is likely to happen soon. Even the Town's leisure centre is going to be far away and not easily accessible.

So what can be done? Well, for one thing, a big plus would be to catch the vandals and throw the book at them. Make examples of them to discourage further incidents. Another would be to have a meeting with the miscreants and ask for their suggestions on curing the boredom police seem to think exists. Perhaps their energy could be channelled into more worth while pursuits.

Meanwhile, Queen's Park passed a bill yesterday which would allow people who had been vandalized to sue the parents of those who committed the act up to \$6,000. It's another measure in the fight to combat the problem which also exists in places "where there's lots to do". Maybe this will help to make parents more responsible for their kids, which surely has something to do with the rash of vandalism which exists.



Mayor wants to keep land for public

Dear Editor,

Headlines and editorial privileges hurt! Subject... McKenzie-Smith Bennett School community lands.

I know that the citizens of Acton bought the land at this location for school and community use in the 1950's. I will do whatever it takes within my power to keep the land in public ownership.

Sincerely,
Marilyn



CAMPAIGN KICKOFF: The Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society kicked off their April fundraising campaign with a chili dinner for volunteers at Trinity Church last Wednesday. At the dinner were, left to right: Cathy Gerrow, Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson, Norm Elliott, Liz Bailey, Rick Bonnette and Clark Somerville. - Angela Tyler photo



Buildings would spoil school land

To the Editor,

Re: Proposed sale of the MSB school property

Regarding the recent article whereby the Mayor of Georgetown South...oh, pardon me... Halton Hills suggested the Town purchase the above mentioned property, we feel that she is missing the whole point of our objections.

We strongly disagree with this property being purchased in order to build structures of any type. With a due respect to our seniors, this includes a seniors' apartment or "one or two homes on either end of the property". It would not be the end of the world...it would definitely be the end of many hours spent by our community, especially our youth, playing their various sports and activities.

Since the town has not provided us with alternate facilities, we cannot afford to lose any part or parcel of this property. If you took the time to research the hours this playing field is used yearly, you would soon find that it not by any means a surplus.

We have collected over 2,000 names on our petitions to date. We will be presenting them to the Halton Board of Education at their meeting of April 19. They are at Home Hardware, Royal Jug City, Lakeview Kitchen & Flooring, Station Hotel, Time Out Sports, Acton Musicland, Andy's Restaurant, Acton Pharmacy and Acton Bowling Lanes. If you have not yet signed this petition, we

urge you to get out now. The more united we are, the better chance we have to save this land.

If you are interested in going to this meeting on April 19, buses are being provided. Please call Kathy at 853-0822 or Roz at 853-5264 or e-mail

@zor 217.yahoo.com. Buses leave at 6:45 p.m. sharp from MSB. Please leave your name, phone number and number of seats you require. We should return by 9:45p.m.

Yours truly,
Kathy Verbeck,
Roz Edwards

Artists appreciated 'incredible welcome'

Dear Editor,

On behalf of myself and my assistant Liz Allardice, I would like to thank the people of Acton and Georgetown for their incredible welcome and hospitality while I was painting in the arena in Acton. The heritage in Canada is richest in the hearts of Canadians who make up each community. You made us feel part of your

community and it was a pleasure spending time with you.

We especially like learning about the heritage of Acton; you have so much heritage in such a small area. We were amazed at the buildings and feel of the area. We look forward to returning with our families.

Warmest painterly regards,
Michelle Loughery/Mural Artist

Ask the teenagers

Dear Editor,

In response to your "Teen Curfew" issue of Thursday March 30, I would like to offer some suggestions. I agree with Detective Sergeant Gordon that "recreational activities and better transportation systems," would help the situation.

What do teens think? What would they like to do in this community instead of vandalize? Go to movies? The nearest theatres are 20-minutes

away with incompatible bus times.

Perhaps some need a creative outlet! May I suggest a skateboard/inline skating park? (Too bad the old arena is gone.)

I see teens fishing; perhaps a fishing club could be created, or art classes, or nature appreciation walks.

The people that need to be asked how resources and funds should be allocated are the teenagers.

Jane Johnson



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Distributed to every home
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