

GRAPEVINE



Lake cleanup

Calling all lake lovers - the Friends of Fairy Lake (FoFL) is holding a spring cleanup of the shoreline in Prospect Park next Saturday (May 26) morning, and wants volunteers - armed with work gloves and rakes - to come to the Boat House at 9 a.m. to help.

Volunteers will be split into four crews to work on specific areas, but they won't be hauling junk out of the lake this time, just helping to clear away a winter's worth of garbage and debris that will be disposed of by the Town. The cleanup is scheduled to wrap up by 11 a.m. when organizers promise refreshments.

Saddle up, sister

Organizers are hoping for a big turnout of big and little Sisters from Acton at the 4th annual trail ride for Big Sisters on June 3 in the 16 Mile Creek valley.

The event - which features easy rides with ponies for the non-riders - is a major fundraiser for the organization, which since 1912 has matched female volunteers with girls aged 5 to 16, for friendship, guidance and support.

There are currently six Acton area girls waiting to be matched with a Big Sister in North Halton. Three of the five Acton Little Sisters are matched with Big Sisters from Georgetown because organizers have a tough time finding Acton volunteers.

For details of the trail ride and/or Big Sister organization, call Rhonda at 854-0818.

McIntyre moves

Cal McIntyre has folded his

hand for the last time.

The veteran card player - a member of the Firemen "A" cribbage team at the Acton Legion - is retiring to an Aberfoyle rest home next week, but residents need not worry about having a card shark in their midst.

"My eyes aren't good," McIntyre said on Friday, explaining why he'd given up cards.

McIntyre was feted at the Legion's recent crib banquet - he played for the Firemen for more than 30 years and had a couple of great hands.

"I had a 28-hand and a 29-hand - you don't get many of them. I enjoyed the game and fellowship just as much as a win," he said.

Festival frenzy

Organizers of this year's Leathertown Festival are overjoyed there's going to be one.

Sixteen people turned up at a planning meeting last week and offered to help make the 10th annual August street party better than ever - just when it looked like a lack of able bodies was going to sink the event.

"There was one lady from Classic Karate who said three more from the club are coming to help - we had close to 20 people there. It was awesome to get that kind of response, BIA co-ordinator Josey Murray, adding, "The (New Tanner) newspaper article did it - it drew people out and it's all new people."

The festival planning committee is still looking for volunteers. Its next meeting is May 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the boardroom of the Acton Legion.



FIRST COMMUNION: Fifty-four children from St. Joseph School received their first Communion on the last Sunday in April at St. Joseph's Church, Acton, the girls in white and the boys in suits and jackets. In front, left to right, are Jake Pinder, Anthony Querques, Jessica Laton, Zofia Mulica, Alicia Golden, Samantha Vanden Enden, Rebecca Nelles, Ivanna Okroukh, Brian Taylor, Ryan Mota. Second row: Aaron James, Jeffrey Longstreet, Shelby Pitre, Emily Schaljo, Kandace Russiani, Maria Spehar, Megan Thompson, Genifer Fernandes, Natasha Quinn, Jade Cook, Madeline Poirier, Derek Geipel. Third row: Mrs. R. Crowe, Jonathan Porty, Ryan Schatti, Phillip Rosenmeier, Natasha Kruitwagen, Sarah Guilbert, Kristina Wyatt, Lauren Garrett, A.J. Snider, Cameron Carr, Blake Noonan, Mrs. A. Newbery, Mrs. S. Hellewell-Clews. Row four: Christopher Azzopardi, Emily Hansen, Danielle Cooper, Alexandra Benacquista, Rebecca Plickert, Kerri-Anne Roper, Alex Citton, Cristina Umbrello, Sarah Morin, Sarah Waldie, Ashley Holmes, Luka Fister, Katelyn Schawill. Row five: Brandon Lockyer, Devin Bailey, Michael Raju, Alex Johnson, William Meadowcroft, Cody Fram, Ryan Boisvenue, Dylan Cremona. - Submitted photo

So, what's the problem?

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's budget, presented last week, contained few surprises. The nuts and bolts have been well-debated and there seems to be little criticism from Ontarians on the whole. I tend to tune out the Liberals and N.D.P. because they are paid to oppose anything and everything the government proposes. Two initiatives especially caught my interest.

It appears that the government has made the first move in bringing the never-ending school disruptions to an end. As I understand it, the government is putting more cash into the system and giving teachers instructional credits for supervisory, coaching and other duties. They appear to be meeting the teachers halfway or more. Now, we shall have to see how the teachers' unions react.

I don't expect the unions to seriously consider the government's proposals. The welfare of the students, and front line teachers, is of little or no importance in this dispute. The real battle is over which side is going to run the Department of Education. It's a fight the teacher/support staff unions are destined to lose. School boards will, ironically, be the catalyst for change.

Both our local boards appear to be well run. Halton schools enjoy relative labour peace and the boards pretty well stay within budget. They complain they're underfunded and, in some areas, they may well be. I expect, however, there will be major changes to the way our schools are managed by the time the next election rolls around.

Many of the larger boards, especially Toronto, think they should fight the Tories full-time. Running the schools is almost an afterthought. One of the new budget proposals is the "Public Sector Accountability Act." Ostensibly, the legislation is aimed at hospital boards, which have severe problems staying within budget. Personally, I suspect there's more afoot here.

The legislation provides for a government takeover of any board who won't balance their books. Under current funding guidelines, boards with older premises will find it almost impossible to balance their budgets

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



without closing many facilities. The trouble is, when the boards try to close underutilized schools, the public goes after the trustees and not the Tories. The trustees back down. Ergo, the budgets go out of whack and the government can step in, close the surplus facilities and blame prior mismanagement, plus rid themselves of a political thorn in its side. Once, started, the other boards will fall like dominos.

To achieve order, the teachers will be declared as an essential service with arbitration replacing the strike option. Many, many teachers will be relieved. Opposition leaders will puff and posture but they too will be secretly pleased to be rid of the political loose cannons present on so many boards. Some management functions will remain in larger regional offices, but the real power will be in Queen's Park. Significant numbers of teachers will complain vociferously and will quit the profession or retire. They'll be replaced.

Of course, none of this could happen if the teachers' unions, realizing that parents and students are fed up with the ongoing turmoil, decide to co-operate with the government on the new guidelines.

Don't hold your breath!

Many media types are up in arms about the plan to allow parents who send their children to private schools a partial tax break on their children's tuition. "It's the end of public education," they claim. Why so? Do they honestly think the public system is in such a bad state that parents will desert it en masse at the first opportunity? I doubt it.

"It's a tax break for the rich," many claim. Balderdash. The rich will send their children to private school, tax break or not. The few dollars they might save are not even part of the equation. Upper Canada College, Branksome Hall and others have had waiting lists since they opened. Gradu-

ates of these schools enroll their own children at birth.

The legislation will help middle class people who are struggling to meet tuition costs for mostly religious schools. I also hope that the teachers in these schools will get a raise because they are grossly underpaid I don't see a problem with this tax proposal at all.

Why shouldn't parents be allowed to send their children to the school of their choice? During the time their children are at schools, why shouldn't their taxes go towards the school their kids attend? Once their children graduate their taxes revert back to the public school system.

I remember when Bill Davis extended funding to the Catholic boards. The Liberal-left bellowed that this spelt the doom for public education. It hasn't happened. If the Catholic boards are growing faster, a claim I doubt, it's because parents choose to send their children there. All parents should be able to make those decisions and it follows they should be able to direct their tax dollars as they see fit. It's still a democracy isn't it?

If public schools lost students to private schools, it's their own damn fault. For years, parents have, at best, been treated condescendingly by the educators. The school system seemed to forget; these are our children. The parents will decide where their kids can get the best education in keeping with individual, cultural and/or religious beliefs. Now, at last this government has recognized that fact. The tax break won't cover the full tuition, but it's a help.

A word of caution, from one who's been there to parents of private school children. Resist the move to full funding where you lose control of school environment and curriculum. Take this tax break and keep your schools as they are.

And lastly, a final word about the heroic campaign towards Lord Stanley's Holy Grail by my beloved Leafs, which recently came to a sudden and tragic end.

Ohnotagainforpete's sake-butthere'salwaysnextyearandwe'relookinggood.



RENEWING THE PAST: Heritage Halton Hills was busy at the arena on Saturday scanning dozens of photos about local people and places. Helping out was Mark Cohen (scanning), Moya Johnson, Jesse Coles and Gord McCutcheon. - Angela Tyler photo

Fame of Moms' calendar spreads into the U.S.

The fame of "The Hockey Moms of Acton 2001 Calendar" has generated publicity all across Canada - and the United States.

Pat Frizzell of Acton has proof from an article clipped out of The Detroit Free Press and sent by her sister in Roseville, Michigan, which featured a photo from the calendar and under the heading "Acton hockey moms are women for all seasons," these words:

"You can only do so many bake sales and car washes, eh?"

"So some Ontario women picked a different way to raise money for their kids' house league: They posed for "The Hockey Moms of Acton 2001 Calendar."

"The 16 moms - who have 17 hockey-playing kids among them - were inspired by "The Men of Ac-

ton Calendar," a fund-raiser for a new Fall Fair building for the community west of Toronto.

"The women underwent some on-the-spot makeovers (thanks to representatives from Mary Kay Cosmetics and a couple of area salons), put on their favourite hockey or referee sweaters, accented with skates or high heels, and posed with hockey sticks, nets, Zambonis and such for the shoot at Acton Arena.

"The whole project took about three weeks to come up with a finished project, and a Web page was set up to sell it.

"The calendar is PG, even though it got a decidedly over-wrought write-up in Maxim magazine.

"The moms did spice it up with more than \$25 worth of coupons from local merchants."