

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Taxing taxes

This writer can remember when an increase of a mill or two in the tax rate was enough to make taxpayers grumble and councillors shudder. Now, it seems a tax increase anywhere from 5 to 10 per cent hardly raises eyebrows although those on low fixed incomes must find it very distressing.

Halton Hills Council, struggling with a budget that loomed as high as a 10 per cent increase and now stands at 6.8 per cent, doesn't seem to be able to rein in costs. All departments wanted a seven per cent increase but got a five per cent increase in their budgets. Add an increase for budget items recommended by the CAO and an increase for road repairs.

Voila! We're looking at a 6.8 per cent hike which could be shredded further as council continues to wrestle with increases.

A 6.8 per cent increase translates into an extra \$57 for a property assessed at \$250,000 or \$897 in total. That's really not a lot for services rendered. However, add the region budget increase, of about four per cent and we're in the 11 per cent range.

Thankfully most people will be able to deal with the increases. Some will see pay increases which will match and surpass the cost of living. Others will find the inflationary spiral another blow to fixed incomes, especially in the part of Ontario where assessments have also increased considerably.

Where will it all end? We used to blame it on downloading from the Province. Remember when Queen's Park sent us cheques for \$200 while the government downloaded costs on to the municipalities?

It suggests we're again falling into the old trap of living beyond our means, or of having champagne tastes on beer budgets.

Some of those crusty politicians such as Esquesing township's two Georges, Currie and Leslie, would find the current increases not only ridiculous but a ticket to political oblivion. Former Acton reeves Dr. Frank Oakes and Bert Hinton, would have conniptions at such increases. But they were different and simpler times with different problems. Councillors now must rely heavily on staff for input on budgets and it is a long, slow, often torturous project with no easy answers.

The best taxpayers can hope for is that councils tailor budgets to suit the pocketbooks of those they represent.

## We'll miss John

Acton lost a unique and colourful character in the untimely death of John Rittenhouse Mowat on January 29, after a short illness. His cheery "Greetings and Salutations" was part and parcel of Acton's downtown. He walked endlessly doing small kindnesses and assisting people in all walks of life.

Someone has described John as a composite John Turner with his shock of white hair, and Forrest Gump, the character from the movie of the same name. He may well have been but there was never any doubt that John marched to a different drummer.

He was well read, kept up on current events, could speak knowledgeably on subjects most of us knew little about, was not afraid to contact prime ministers, the Queen, the White House and even the Pope, when he had something to say. He could supply you with their telephone numbers, vouched for by friends who checked them out.

Mayor Rick Bonnette tells a story about Bob Nixon, the provincial Liberal leader, introducing John to a large Liberal audience as a descendant of Ontario's first Premier, Oliver Mowat. He also recalls a bus trip to a Blue Jays game when John directed the bus to Premier Bill Davis' driveway in Brampton and requested Rick to disembark, knock on the door and invite him to the ball game.

There are dozens of other stories such as the time John was escorted into the United Nations Assembly in New York by two sheiks in burnouses, robes which flowed behind their sandalled feet. Many years ago this editorialist watched a Grey Cup parade in Toronto with Calgary playing the Argos in the game. Up front on the Calgary float was John, at home amongst the cowboys and cowgirls.

It would be difficult to put John Rittenhouse Mowat in any pigeon hole. He was unique, a well loved character whom we will all miss. RIP John.



**RIBBONS AND BOWS:** Official opening and ribbon-cutting of Sew Fun recently was performed by Acton BIA coordinator Josey Bonnette, and was assisted by, left to right, Jon Hurst, Josey Bonnette, store owner Diane Weston, Mike O'Leary and Russell Weston. - Danielle McIsaac photo.

## 10 dates for \$10?...fantasy?

In the middle of a very cold winter, sometimes you just want something different to do other than running as fast as you can from your vehicle into the warmth of your home.

Maybe that's why it was hard to resist clicking on the Internet item "Top 10 Dates for Under \$10." I'm not sure what I was expecting but it certainly appealed to the thrifty side of me. A date for under \$10 was hard to believe, almost impossible because even now if you go to the movies it can run in excess of \$40 for a couple.

After work that day I stopped by the Dude's work on my way home. I wanted to see what he thought of these date ideas. "I need to do some research for my column," I told him. That was greeted with a slight sound of acknowledgment as he worked under a vehicle atop of the hoist.

"10 dates for \$10," I said. Suddenly that got his attention as his head turned to me. "A buck a date...that's a good deal," he said. Apparently I forgot to be specific that each date was under \$10. Dude Sr. (Dude's dad) walked in mid-conversation. "A dollar a date?" he asked. I was not the only thrifty one in the crowd.

After about five minutes of trying to explain it was 10 dates



By  
Angela Tyler

for \$10 each date and being teased with their British sense of humour, I left and promised to finish my research later.

That evening I called the Dude to further discuss my research. However trying to get his attention while it was clearly being consumed by the Anna-Nicole show was a task in itself. Yet, when I started reading him the article, I became skeptical, too. "Try one of these 10 fun dates designed to make your heart race but go easy on your pocketbook." It seemed a little silly.

"Number one...work up a sweat," I started. "Get off the couch, grab your guy and strap on a pair of rollerblades...take a leisurely blade through the neighbourhood." On the other end of the phone I was met with silence except for the annoying Anna-Nicole theme song. Either way, one was out of the question with endless amounts of snow everywhere. Actually, numbers 3 and 4 were also out of the question for now as one was a picnic and the other was camping, neither of

which are realistic choices.

By this time, the three-way conversation between myself, the Dude and Anna-Nicole was getting a little crowded and I was on the losing end. "Are you still there?" I asked him. He assured me he was indeed listening. However after reviewing the other seven ideas with him, the Anna-Nicole show was even looking good to me now.

I have no idea how playing scavenger hunt would be fun or make my heart race. I did find amusement in the fact that they noted to make sure the clues are easy enough for him to understand. Nothing like stereotyping the male gender. I had to face the facts that these ideas weren't great, let alone romantic. They were just things anyone could do that didn't cost money.

The next evening, I ran into Dude's mom and Dude Sr. at IGA. Somehow the \$10 dates crept into the conversation. Dude Sr. wanted to know all about the article. However, I told them I would give them the copy and let them give it a whirl and they could let me know what they thought. Maybe they'd find them fun.

Saturday, the Dude and I

*continued on page 7*



**THE NEW TANNER**  
PUBLISHING LTD.

373 Queen Street East, Unit 1  
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2

email: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com

(519) 853-0051 Fax: 853-0052

**Publisher**

Ted Tyler

**Editorial**

Hartley Coles

**Editorial Contributors**

Frances Niblock Mike O'Leary Ellen Piehl  
Maggie Petrushevsky Angela Tyler Janis Fread

**Advertising and Circulation**

Marie Shadbolt Bruce Cargill

**Composing**

Danielle McIsaac Kasia Walasek Laura Maitland

*Distributed to every home  
in Acton and area as well as  
adjoining communities.*

#### ADVERTISING POLICY

Every effort will be made to see advertising copy, neatly presented, is correctly printed. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for typographical errors or omissions in advertising, but will gladly reprint without charge that part of an advertisement in which an error may occur provided a claim is made within five days of publication.