

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

The PM's headaches

Paul Martin must feel like one of the most embattled Canadian prime ministers in history as the Gomery Commission unfolds, a commission which the Liberals established to root out abuses, and now is turning on them.

However probably the most vexing thing for the prime minister is the fact that Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, a fellow Liberal, is turning the screws on Ottawa to come up with a fiscal deal not unlike the ones Newfoundland and Nova Scotia wrung out of the federal government.

Martin must feel even more betrayed by the fact McGuinty had a "cordial conversation" with federal Conservative leader Stephen Harper. The Conservative leader recently pledged he would help Ontario secure better funding from Ottawa since the prime minister and his cabinet seemed to be dismissing the province's attempts to get a fairer deal as a lot of hot air.

McGuinty, of course, faced with a \$6 billion deficit finally figured out the feds were screwing Ontario good when Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams and Nova Scotia's John Hamm struck side deals for \$2 billion and \$830 million respectively from Ottawa, money from oil revenue which had previously been cut back under the wealth sharing equalization program. In effect it meant Ontario along with Alberta, would have to put more money into the equalization for the "have-not" provinces.

So Premier McGuinty noting that tactics used by Williams and Hamm such as taking the Canadian flag down, naturally sought an ally in Mr. Harper whose star has been rapidly rising as testimony at the Gomery Commission unfolds. It just goes to show you can't trust anyone in politics, a cynic might say. In any event we think McGuinty is right and it looks like that realization finally hit home with the federal Liberals. They can see their support in Ontario dissolving the longer they withhold the \$5 billion in federal funding McGuinty is asking for in another side deal.

In 1995 Ontario used to pay only \$2 billion into the equalization pot. It has now bloomed into an astounding \$23 billion, money which could well be used in this province which is running a \$6 billion deficit.

Obviously if Ontario succeeds in wringing more money from Ottawa then Alberta will be next in line since they also contribute generously to equalization payments. And since Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, both "have-not" provinces could strike a deal why would the others not try for one as well.

No wonder Prime Minister Martin is holding his head especially since the threat of a federal election is gaining support.

Weather or not?

The weather this Spring in this neck of the woods has been hard to believe.

One weekend we're buried under a foot of snow in blizzard-like conditions. The next we're basking in balmy temperatures reaching 20 degrees Celsius. (That's warm for April.)

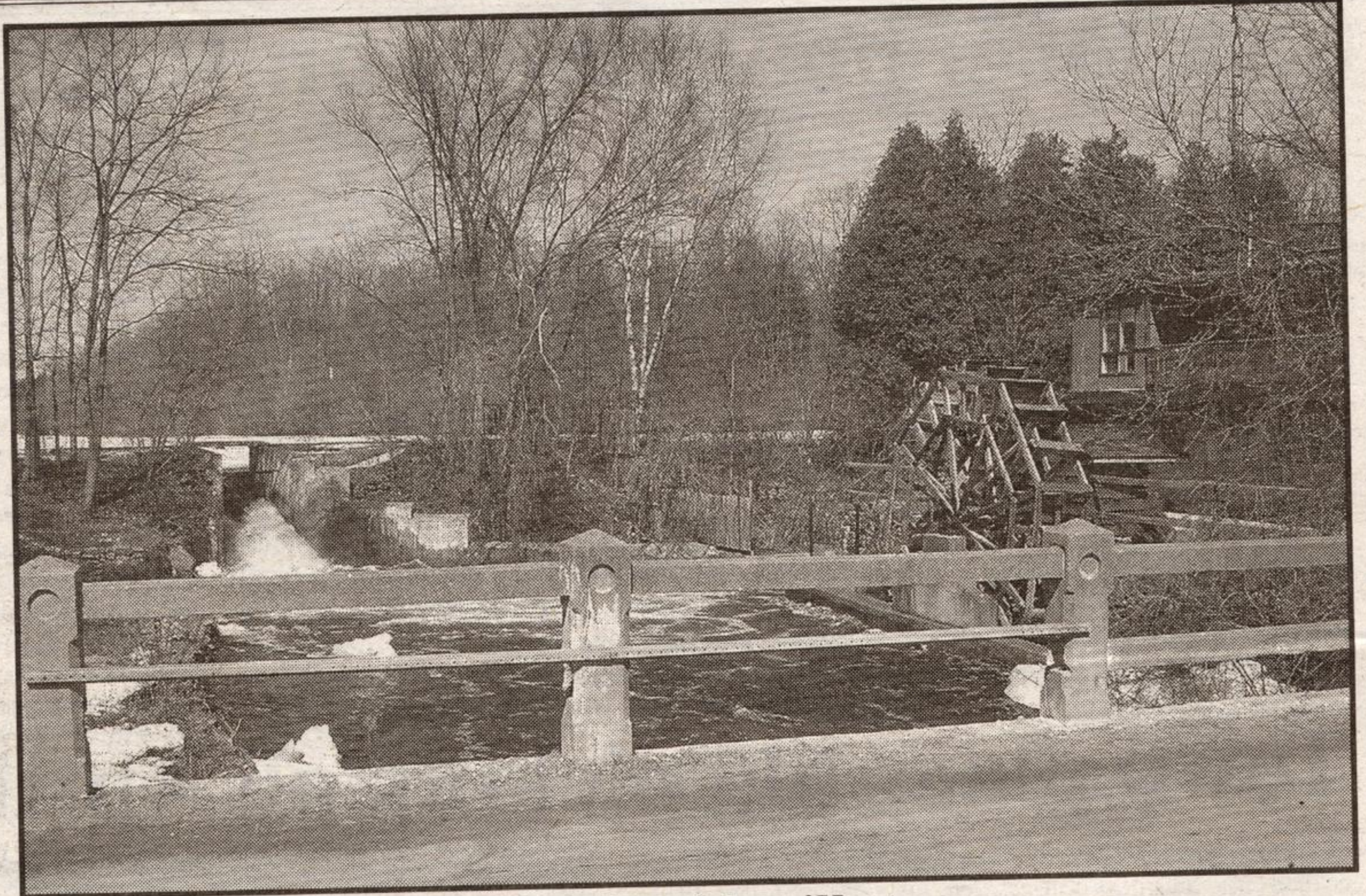
One week we're encased in parkas and boots - the next we're in shorts and sandals. One week we are shoveling snow, the next gardening rakes are out and we're cleaning up winter's debris.

One week we think it's the beginning of another ice age. The next we're convinced the environmentalists are right and we're into global warming.

The variations in the weather certainly suggest weather patterns are changing. For those of us who are a little longer in the tooth and can remember when Spring was Spring and Summer was Summer it's hard not to hope for a return to the traditional role of the seasons.

If that's what the weather is up to then here's some sustained applause. However, if we're headed into a time when the seasons merge into one another willy-nilly, and no one can predict conditions from one week to the next, then it is getting an outstretched tongue from this corner.

Of course, we know we have to take what we get and there's nothing anyone can do about it anyway but hope. And perhaps that's the best thing.



Down by the old mill stream

The Eramosa River plunges over the dam at the heart of Eden Mills as the Spring run-off reached its peak and the swollen river continues on its way to join the Grand in Guelph.

This pooch has selective hearing

There is a senior citizen in my life who is conning people. Nobody else thinks that way, but she and I know the truth.

The senior citizen is the Dude's 10-year-old dog, Shadow. She's been playing a game, but I'm now wise to her.

When I first hooked up with the Dude, we talked about our two older dogs who are both the same age, only weeks apart. "She's deaf," he informed me. The Dude had trained Shadow to obey hand signals in her declining years.

My dog, Kodi, has perfect hearing; however, the little psycho has learned the art of "selective" hearing over the past few years. Some people seem to choose what they want to hear and ignore the rest. Kodi is no different. He has perfect hearing when it comes to the word treat and a loss of hearing when it comes to following direction from his owner.

While we dated, I too, was convinced that Shadow was deaf. She offered no response to her name or even to the offer of a "treat" to which all dogs respond. However, since our joined union and amalgamation of hounds, I've discovered she absolutely is not deaf. She, too,



By Angela Tyler

has selective hearing.

My first clue was when Shadow was in the backyard one night, nowhere in sight. It was the dogs' dinner time and the Dude wasn't home yet. I filled her bowl with kibble, opened the door and mistakenly hollered her name and dinner as I do with Kodi, forgetting she was deaf. By the time I started shaking my head wondering why I hollered her name, Shadow had appeared at the door ready for dinner.

I chalked the first incident up to a weird coincidence. Since then I've noticed some of her behaviour around me isn't exactly how she behaves around her "dad." "She only eats treats outside," the Dude informed me when I tried to give her one in the kitchen. I looked down and Shadow had dropped the dog bone on the floor and walked away.

A day or so later, the two dogs had come inside and I offered them each a milk bone which both

dogs quickly gobbled... inside the house. It was then I started thinking somebody is playing a game.

Her games continued. "Woof, woof," she barked in her deep voice as I pulled up the driveway and walked into the house. Moments before that I saw her peacefully sleeping on the lawn. Now she was standing at the back door greeting me. Like other dogs, she knows the sounds of certain vehicles.

When the Dude came home she was apparently completely asleep, not hearing anything until he came over and tapped her head to wake her. As he headed to wash up before dinner, Shadow walked by me with what seemed to be a grin on her face. It was almost like she was telling me, "I fooled him again."

Deaf dog...ha! I'm convinced it is selective hearing. Maybe part of the reason was the enormous St. Bernard ears that hang over her sound system or maybe she is losing her hearing. But more and more I think she just knew how to get her own way with her "dad" and letting the "step-mom" know what really goes on when "dad" isn't there.



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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 Angela Tyler
Janis Fread Rebecca Ring

Advertising and Circulation
Marie Shadbolt Bruce Cargill

Composing
Danielle Mclsaac Janine Taylor

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