

# THE HALTON HILLS WEEKEND

**KEN NUGENT**  
Publisher

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## Gassed out

We're all for a free marketplace and less government interference, but the situation with gasoline distributors is getting a bit out of hand.

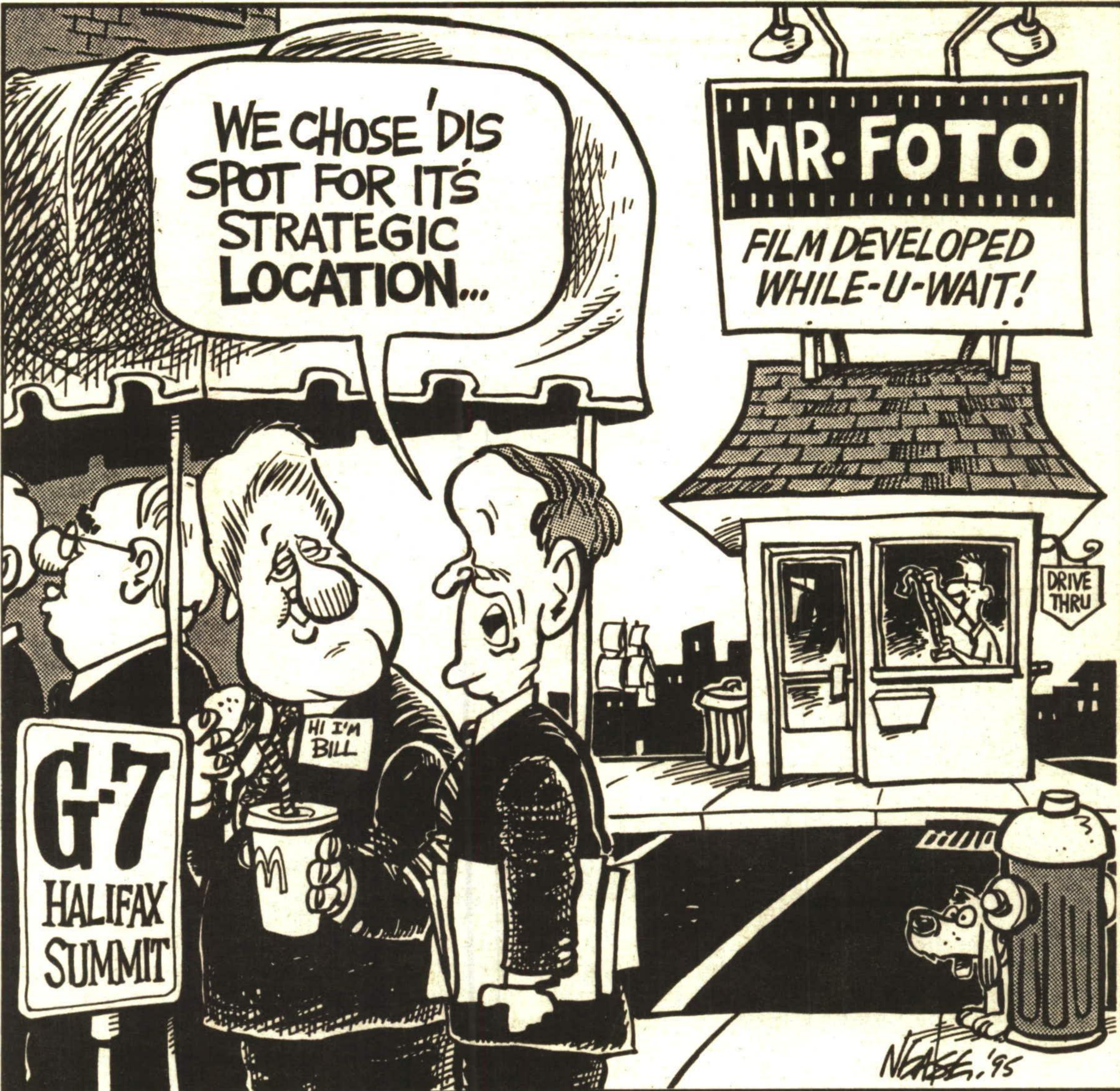
Recently gas prices were hovering around the 53 cents-a-litre mark. Then they shot up to the 60 cent range.

Oil company executives rationalized the hike by saying it signified the end of local gas price wars and a lowering of the oil reserves in Brazil.

Government regulation is the last thing we need, but surely there must be something put in place that would allow oil companies to make their millions while not arbitrarily raising and lowering prices on a whim and, in effect, holding the motoring public hostage.

Gasoline is an essential commodity. If the oil companies banded together and decided to raise the price per litre to \$1, there wouldn't be much the public could do besides scream in outrage. After all, goods have to be transported, people have to get to work, and emergency vehicles have to have full gas tanks.

Unfortunately, neither our provincial or federal governments seem too concerned with the arbitrary raising and lowering of gas prices and that means motorists will continue to be the puppet of these profiteering companies.



## Unfortunately, there's a few bad apples

It seems trucks have figured pretty prominently in the news these days, bringing about a plethora of emotions from everyday people.

In Georgetown, special interest groups have been whining about the truck traffic on major arteries into town, all adopting a "not in my back yard" attitude, as they attempt to ban the large rigs from traveling through town.

I don't support their cause, since they simply want the road to themselves and their arguments are based on unfounded "what if" scenarios about truckers on Maple Avenue and Mountainview Road.

I drive Maple Avenue all the time, both to and from work, and regularly during the day. I must say, I feel the professional drivers behind the wheels of the trucks are probably the safest ones on that road.

Especially when compared to some of the parents who fly by to take their kids to school before they're late.

But I do have a major concern about truck safety and its impact on traffic.

Numerous truck accidents on our major highways, caused by malfunctions like broken suspension or loose wheels have certainly prompted officials to come down hard on the truckers, and I'm in complete agreement with the policing.

I just have one small problem.

The fines are a joke. Earlier this week, when a tractor trailer carrying 30,000 kilograms of toluene-based traffic paint resin, a

hazardous and explosive substance, ended up laying on its side on one of the on ramps of Hwy. 401, it just supported my argument further.

The driver was charged with failing to do a proper trip inspection. And the trucking company, the owner of the trailer, was charged with failing to ensure the vehicle conformed to standard.

Wow. Apparently the fines for these offences are in the area of a thousand bucks.

Double wow — a thousand bucks.

What's a \$1,000 to a major

regard those fines as a cost of doing business.

As I said, a joke, nothing but a joke.

And so unnecessary.

Over the years, I've known many local truckers personally and have come to admire their pride in keeping their rigs in safe working order. They're committed to maintaining a safe and attractive truck, and strive to operate their vehicles in a prudent and professional manner.

But unfortunately, as with all professions, there are a few bad apples.

Those are the ones who take the easy way out, the cheap and irresponsible route, and in the process, jeopardize the safety of everyone they share the road with.

No, I agree with the increased policing, and hope it continues.

But let's take a different approach.

Why warn them when there will be a safety blitz?

The bad apples simply take to the back roads.

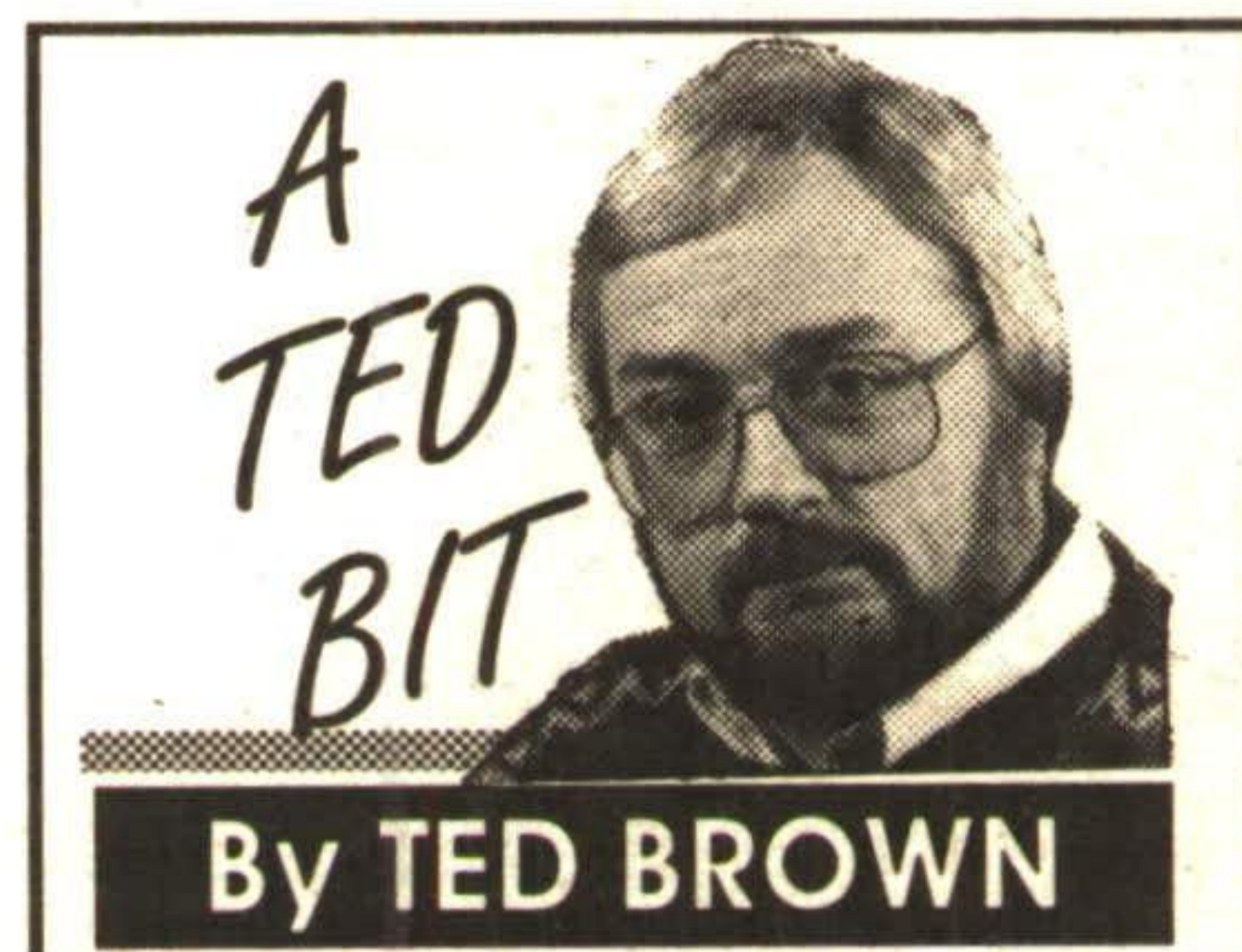
Why not give good operators some incentive, like insurance or tax breaks for maintaining a high vehicle standard at safety checks?

And why not charge the offenders a fine that makes a statement?

Like, a couple of hundred thousand bucks for a major offence.

I think it would be amazing how fast trucks would be repaired and upgraded.

And equally amazing how much safer our roads would be.



trucking company — a few fill-ups at the local diesel depot?

Meanwhile, 14 lanes of the 401 had to be shut down for hours with thousands of people evacuated, and countless others were late for work or, worse still, never made it to work, simply because this rig's brakes and suspension weren't up to snuff. Estimates of the cost to the city and its commuters for the day's disruption have been pegged in excess of several million dollars, just in lost wages and sales at local retail outlets.

I'm sure unscrupulous operators have come to

RR2

You know you're in trouble when your parrot gets to talk more than you do.

### Did you know?

Prices for regular unleaded gasoline in April averaged 53.6 cents per litre. Taxes accounted for 53 per cent — 14.7 cents to the provincial government and 13.5 cents to the federal government. Crude oil costs were 17.1 cents of that 53.6 cents; refining and marketing costs, 6.5 cents and the dealer's take was only 1.8 cents for every litre sold. In France, taxes are \$1.26 cents of the total price of \$1.57 CDN cents/litre. UK citizens pay \$1.29 CDN cents/litre of which 99 cents goes to taxes and Americans pay 42 CDN cents/ litre of which 14 cents goes to taxes.

— Petroleum Communication Foundation