

THE HALTON HILLS **WEEKEND**

**KEN NUGENT**  
Publisher

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Photography: Ted Brown

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CIRCULATION/SUBSCRIPTIONS - 873-0301

Director of Distribution: Dave Coleman

Circulation Manager: Nancy Geissler



Mailing Address: 211 ARMSTRONG AVE. GEORGETOWN, ONT. L7G 4X5

# Have your say

If there is one year that the Halton Board of Education should be approving a zero per cent increase budget — this is it.

Their current proposal, however, calls for a 1996 expenditure budget of \$286 million, an increase of 1.38 per cent over last year's budget. Part of the increase results from the ending of the Social Contract and major spending in administrative and instructive technology.

But after laying off more than 1,500 staff members March 5, and planning to layoff another 25 per cent of its management personnel in mid-May, we wonder how trustees could justify more expense and a tax hike.

It should be noted that in January, trustees ordered staff to prepare a report on the impact of a zero per cent mill increase. And the board warns that if a no increase budget is achieved it could be at the cost of school programs. For example, kindergarten could be on alternate days, and there could be cutbacks in the instrumental music, design and technology, family studies, and co-curricular activities programs.

This budget is not set in stone — yet — and the public is invited to be a part of the deliberations, at meetings March 25-27, 7:30 p.m. nightly at the board's headquarters on the Guelph Line, Burlington.

This is your chance for trustees to hear what you think. If you have something to say, say it.

**Did you know?**

Centuries ago when Britain was ruled by Rome, there was a boy named Patrick, who lived in Britain with his family. Although Patrick's parents raised him as a Christian, he didn't take their teachings serious. He preferred to follow the sinful ways of the other youths when one day he was captured by a band of Irish marauders who took him as a slave back to their country. Patrick began to pray, asking God for forgiveness, and the Lord heard his prayer, filling him with new faith. One night, God showed Patrick how to escape, and after six years of slavery, he found his way back to Britain. From that time on Patrick dedicated his life to God, eventually receiving Holy Orders. One night at prayer, an angel appeared with a message that the people of Ireland were asking for him to return to their country. Patrick saw God's purpose in all that had happened before and he chose to return. In the early days he faced persecution, but Patrick came to be regarded as an angel among men. Now a saint Patrick stands as a symbol of the Irish, of the special love of God that is theirs ...

— submitted by KEN BAKER



## It's March break, and we've got the place to ourselves

As I drove into work the other day, I suddenly felt all alone in the world.

You see, I had the road all to myself.

No one in sight!

Now at first I wondered if I had forgotten some statutory holiday, or there had been a mass evacuation of the town.

Or maybe the road was closed off for someone to film another movie in town.

But the traffic guy on the radio quickly dispelled my fears.

"With March break upon us, traffic is much lighter than usual, and the Gardiner is only backed up to ...."

Silly me, I forgot, even though I actually had the bathroom to myself that morning, and had left a house full of kids at home, (although all of them were still in bed.)

Yup, it's March break, that segment of the Canadian winter when about half of the Canuck population flees the winter confines in search of some sunshine.

And warmth.

The same day I questioned my sanity about 'where everybody was' I noticed something else.

It was a huge blazing ball of fire, located waaaaay up in the sky.

And with that ball of fire, everything around me was glowing and warm.

Distant recollections from long ago reminded me that I was observing a rare Canadian winter phenomenon, called sunshine.

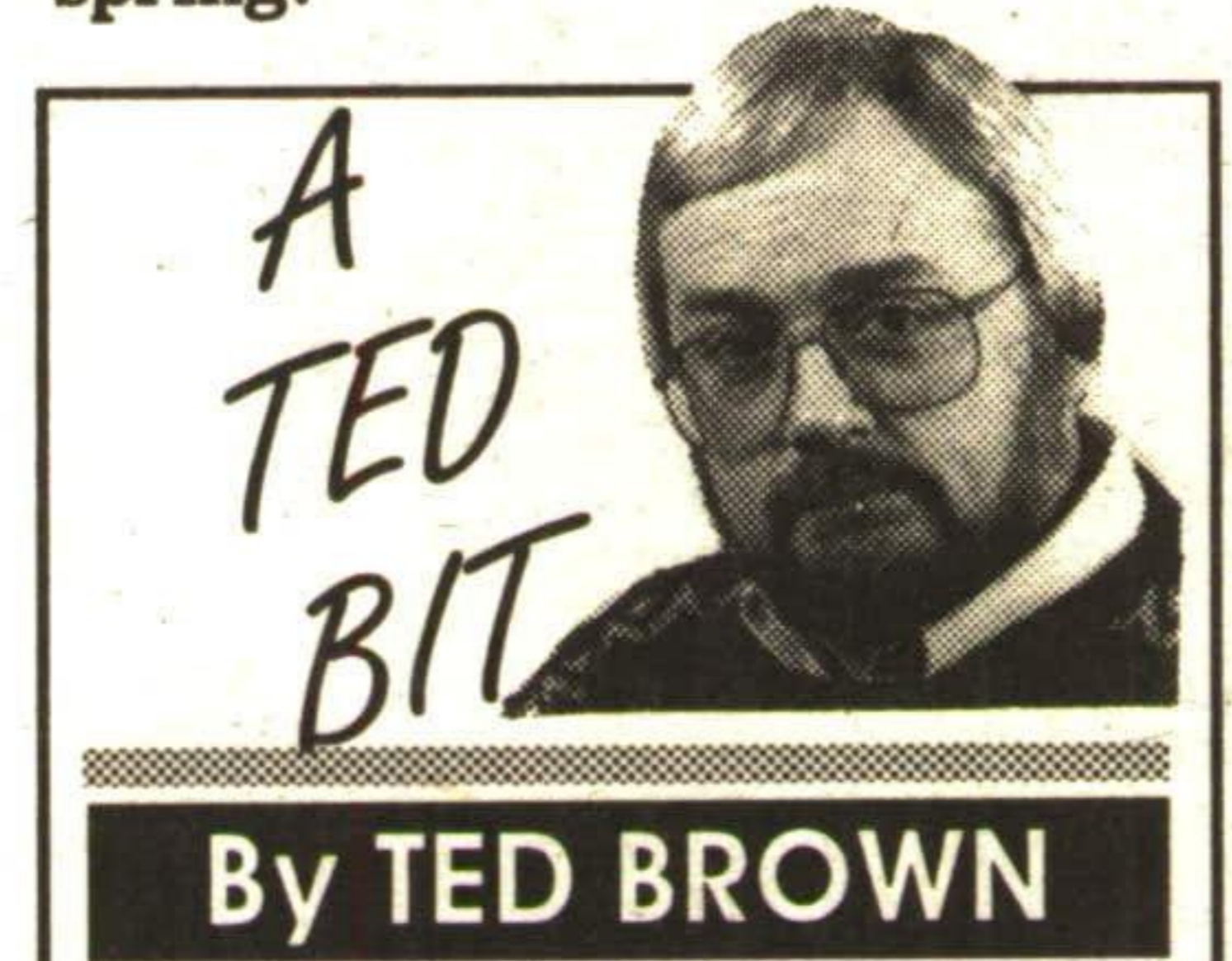
So I had it all, the warmth of the sunshine, and the road to myself.

At times like that, I can't understand why anyone would want to leave this country behind and head south for mid-winter break, particularly now, when spring is breathing down our necks.

And those travelers must pay the exchange on the American dollar to boot.

It's not that I begrudge anyone going south — it's just not something I wanna do.

This is a great time of the year, with the snow disappearing, the bare ground peeking through, and the air's filled with that earthy scent of spring.



Apparently, many don't agree.

Friends and acquaintances of ours embarked upon that trek to the sunny state, most of them leaving very early last Saturday morning, "to get a jump on the traffic."

It occurred to me, if they were all leaving at 3 or 4 a.m. to get that "jump on the traffic," then they'll all be trying to cross the border at precisely the same time.

But, they're all gone now and, like a bunch of school kids whose parents have gone out for the evening, we've got the place to ourselves.

It's great.

And think of all the benefits.

This week the mall parking lot is only half full and local traffic is nearly bearable. And I haven't had to stop for one crossing guard on my way to work.

After a discussion in the office, I find I'm not alone in my views.

One of my co-workers has a sister who lives in Florida the year round. She received a call from her southerly sibling, who whined and complained about the cold weather Florida has been experiencing lately.

I can assure you, she received little sympathy from this end.

Another co-worker told me how she enjoyed this time of the year because "everything is so fresh and growing, as spring is awakening."

(A bit poetic, but I couldn't have said it better myself.)

At home, as I sat at the breakfast table, just days after our friends had left for the sunny states, my wife and I enjoyed a quiet cup of coffee, listening to the news on the radio.

"There's been a record cold snap in Florida today, with the mercury plunging below the freezing mark, so if you're heading south, be sure to pack extra clothing, as it doesn't show signs of letting up for a week or so..."

I'm sorry, I couldn't help it. Nor could my wife.

As the glorious sunshine streamed in the kitchen window, casting a golden square on the floor, we both reacted the same way.

We smiled.