

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Paying real cost

We've always been in favour of people paying their own way in this world – if it's at all possible – so really we can't quibble much about the McGuinty Liberals raising hydro rates to reflect the real cost of electricity. However, we're more than a little piqued by the revelation that the government approved a huge pay raise for hydro executives almost simultaneous with the rate hike.

We're sure Hydro One CEO Tom Parkinson is worth a lot of money but the \$500,000 pay raise he received as his pay packet reaches \$1.56 million seems excessive. Especially in view of the kicking consumers are getting and the fact Mr. McGuinty promised to keep hydro rates at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour in 2006, during the election campaign.

The fact is the 11 per cent Halton Hills hydro consumers will pay starting May 1 is the third rate hike announced since the McGuinty government came into power. In some areas that reflects in a 55 per cent rate hike, a real jolt to low and modest income families and small businesses who feel it the most.

We hear a lot of talk from people who hardly feel the sting of higher rates, about the necessity of cutting back on power use by buying new appliances, new energy-saving windows, fluorescent instead of incandescent light bulbs, etc., etc. Outside of the fact most low and modest income families can't afford the former and already have the latter, it's a device to throw us off the real problem.

A lot of people are struggling to pay their way now with higher municipal taxes, exorbitant gasoline prices and bigger grocery bills and a myriad of other smaller increases as well. The new hydro rates are another high-voltage jolt, as NDP leader Howard Hampton likes to describe the increase. Some relief is being afforded by a one-time grant of up to \$120 for low income families but there's a lot out there who won't receive a cent and they're already hurting.

As said earlier we're in favour of people paying their own way. However as long as we experience almost uncontrollable growth in Ontario, the demand for power is going to grow and costs will continue to rise. Then we pay for the cost of growth which is another subject for another day.

## Honouring Fair Board

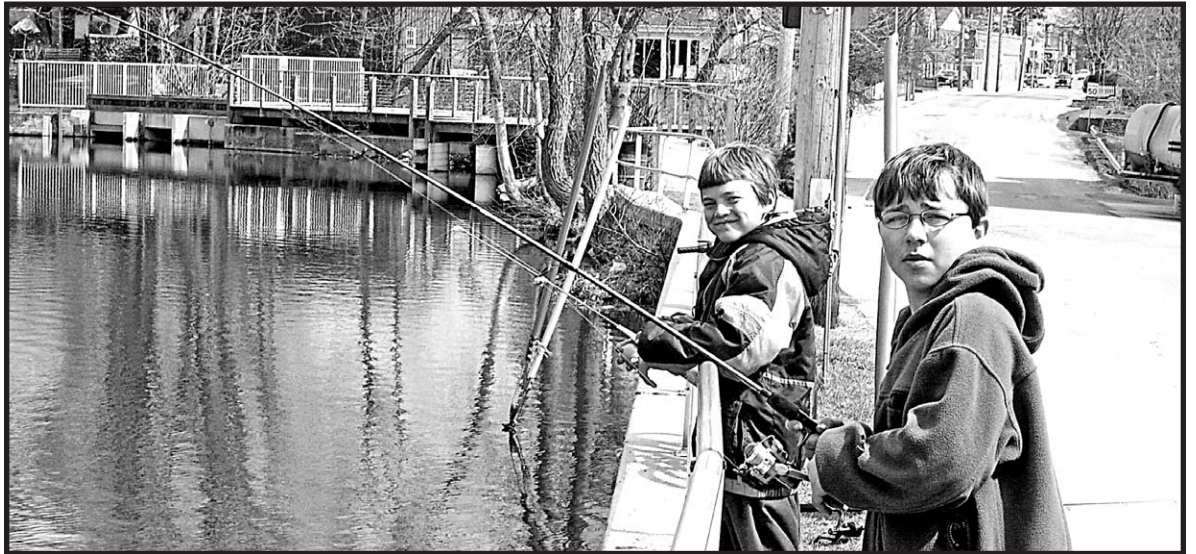
When judges announced their selection of the Acton Agricultural Society as the 2006 Acton Citizen of the Year in March, the news was somewhat overshadowed at the time by a tragic train-car collision on the Dublin Line.

To correct the coincidence, a dinner to honour the Fair Board, as the Agricultural Society is commonly known, is on tap for Friday, May 12 at the Blue Springs Golf Course. The night will give all a chance to show their appreciation and respect for the work the Society has done in Acton and district since the first Acton Fall Fair in 1913.

The fair has evolved from a one day mid-week event to a three day celebration, the most important social happening of the year. Its popularity never seems to decline; in fact, it continues to grow despite a multitude of other attractions aimed at seducing the public.

But it wasn't just the annual fall fair which induced the judges to select the Agricultural Society as 2006 Citizens of the Year. The Society cleans up Regional Rd. 25, sells Black Gold, and does a multitude of other things to raise funds for a new building. That new \$1.6 million building is almost a reality now, hopefully built in time for the 2006 Fall Fair.

Of course, the struggle to rebuild on the site of the old arena, torn down in a fit of political pique six years ago, certainly influenced the judges' decision. The proposed 22,000 square foot building will not only allow the Agricultural Society to reclaim its venue for displays but provide an attractive building for a variety of other activities sidelined by lack of an indoor facility.



**FISH TALES:** Weeds were all that were on the end of Kenny Walker's line (left) as he fished with his younger brother Blake at the Mill Street dam on Easter Monday. – Frances Niblock photo

## Foot loose, fancy-free in the U.S.

The Dude and I have our own Easter tradition. Most families go to a family dinner on Easter Sunday or utilize the long weekend for time with extended family. We, on the other hand use the time to avoid that. We use the long weekend to go away and spend quality time together which is so precious and sometimes scarce.

This year, I was surprised when the Dude had suggested Ohio. Why Ohio? our family asked. It was simple. Keeping true to our roots, there was a gigantic flea market that we had been lucky enough to stop at once before coming back from Florida. Actually, it was two flea markets on either side of I-75. Sure it would be a bit longer than a drive to Niagara Falls, but it was quality time together and the drive didn't really matter. I was looking forward to talks, some silly like why a pair of jeans is called a pair when it was only one "pair" of jeans, to singing along to tunes on the radio. I love road trips together.

It always seems that during our adventures, the odd, the unusual or just the weird seem to magnate towards me. This trip would be no different. It was near the end of our first day. The Dude had picked a perfect hotel that offered free evening drinks and snacks, a hot morning breakfast, free US long distance and free high speed



By  
Angela Tyler

internet with a king-sized room that included a spa-like bathroom which happened to be within walking distance of one of our favourite American restaurants. Being within 20 minutes of the market, it was ideal.

As we headed down for our free evening happy hour, we couldn't help but notice something icky. There they were. There was a family or two with about a half a dozen children. The kids were all barefoot in the lounge area. They were kind of grubby as they made a mess of the free food all over the floor as they downed the free sugar laced soda. The parents were barefoot, too. The Dude made a comment and I was kind of grossed out with the barefeet. Apparently they hadn't heard of the no shoes-no service rule.

With the barefeet behind us, we headed out for dinner. I was really looking forward to it. After dinner, the Dude returning from the restroom noticed something odd besides the fact that we were asked if we wanted the smoking or non-smoking area of the restaurant.

We hadn't been asked that in years.

The Dude was surprised by a lady, who appeared to be about six months pregnant and was sitting at the bar, smoking while ordering a beer. I looked oddly at him as he told me his tale. "You know, it's people like that who give Americans a bad name," I told him. It's odd. I am totally against stereotyping, but I couldn't help but think of Jeff Foxworthy when he does his redneck spiel, the movie Joe Dirt or the term "trailer trash." I felt bad stereotyping, assuming the woman fits into this category but who, being six months pregnant, bellies up to the bar and orders a beer?

Later that day we were finishing making our way around the market. It had been a day of bad American stereotypes with big permed hair, 1970's and 80's clothing, odd-shaped people who looked like they should be in the movie Super Size Me, and booths at the market that offered deep fried everything including your favourite chocolate bar. It was like we were in a bad dream. Then we saw the latest oddity. Actually, we saw him. He looked about four years old. He was so chubby, he couldn't walk with his legs together. It was hard not to notice him because he had a blue Mohawk haircut and his dad had numerous tattoos which everyone saw because he was shirtless. What made him even more special

*Continued on page 7*



**THE NEW TANNER**  
PUBLISHING LTD.

373 Queen Street East, Unit 1  
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2  
email: [thenewtanner@on.aibn.com](mailto:thenewtanner@on.aibn.com)

(519) 853-0051 Fax: (519) 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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