

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Not much sympathy

People in Toronto pay the lowest property taxes in the GTA acknowledges city councillor Howard Moscoe in a letter to the Toronto Star. So why are Toronto taxpayers so opposed to the proposed land transfer tax and motor vehicle registration fee that would have raised \$356 million to help ease a \$575 million budget shortfall?

That's easy. No one likes a hike in their cost of living. But Moscoe's correct in noting Toronto's property taxes are well below those in 905 regions of Halton, Peel, York and Durham. And that's a major part of the problem.

Toronto's city council froze property taxes, or only raised them slightly, when the Province downloaded costs on all Ontario municipalities. The other municipalities however, bit the bullet, increasing property taxes well above the rate of inflation to balance budgets.

Now the chickens are coming home to roost in Toronto and the city wants sympathy for the rest of Ontario municipalities all in the same downloading boat.

Halton Region along with York and Peel got some relief in the 2007 provincial budget when Queen's park began easing the obligations to fund some of Toronto's social services. By 2013 it saves them \$200 million a significant amount.

Toronto meanwhile, received approval to levy other funds which led to the proposed land transfer tax and increase in vehicle registration fees. City council, however delayed making a decision until the fall, obviously to wait the results of the upcoming election and possibly a more sympathetic government.

It's true, as Toronto politicians maintain, that the city has unique challenges other municipalities don't face, But they also have services people in small towns, can only dream of.

When the city increases its property taxes to match those in other municipalities must pay then they'll get support from the rest of the province to march to Queen's Park for relief.

Meanwhile, we can only sit and watch as Toronto, the richest city in the province and all of Canada, struggles to pay its own way.

No longer a runt

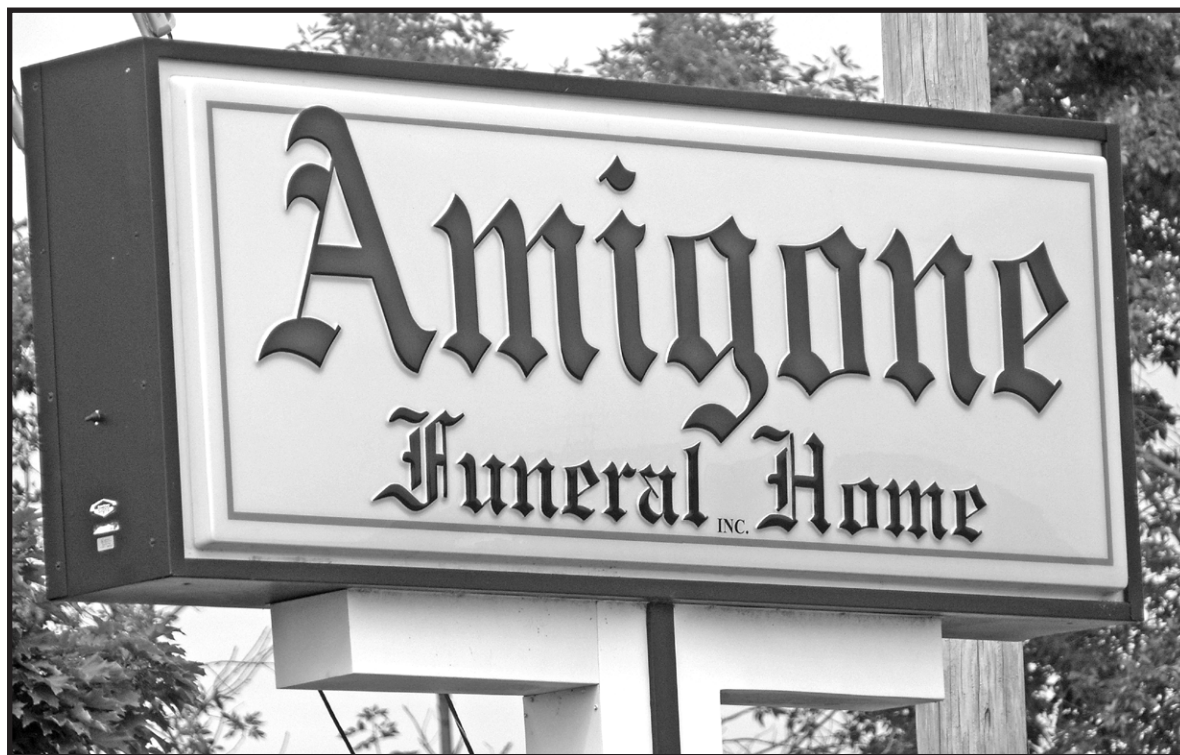
Frustrated that the high Canadian dollar is not having an effect on the price of imported goods? So is federal finance minister Jim Flaherty. He has told business leaders the government expects then to pass savings from the higher Canadian dollar to consumers.

If consumers don't see the benefits soon, Flaherty says, they should exert pressure on companies by shopping around for the lowest prices. Hardly a significant slap on the fingers but a recognition at least that business has not responded to the loonie's new status.

Many prices on imports from greeting cards to cars were set when the loonie was running around 65 cents on the U.S. buck. As of last Friday the Canadian dollar was valued at 94.83¢ after rising as high as 96.36¢ U.S. on July 24.

Mr. Flaherty's suggestion that Canadians shop around for lower prices sounds like an invitation to shop in the U.S. where prices are remarkably lower. However, he says he's concerned Canadians might shop in the U.S. unless business responds to the loonie's rise in value. It's a little late since it is already a fact.

Business leaders, responded to Flaherty's remarks saying inventories of goods purchased was done when the dollar was weak. Corporate planning periods are longer than a few months, they say. However their argument loses some credibility since a recent Bank of Montreal report shows the loonie has appreciated 50 per cent over the last five years, not a few months. Obviously, Canadians are not benefiting from the meteoric rise in the dollar and we should shop around for value reminding retailers our buck is no longer the "runt" of five years ago.



Off the beaten path with the Dude

I have to admit there is probably nothing more I enjoy more than when the Dude and I have one of our road trips. Whether they are a one day, or a multi day outing, I treasure the time we have with just ourselves and where ever our travels take us.

It being a long weekend last weekend we couldn't miss another opportunity for quality time. We weren't really sure what we were going to do, but in the end we shuffled off to just outside of Buffalo. Friends of the Dude told him about a little town there that is full of antique markets and stores. We had been there before and it seemed like a nice idea to go again.

I'm not too big on antiques. However, the Dude likes roaming for interesting trinkets and fireman memorabilia to add to Dude Sr's collection. My compromise was that he wasn't to grump when he took me to my three favourite American stores... Target, J.C. Penney and the Dollar Tree.

We had a great weekend, with the exception of taking two hours at Niagara Falls to go two kilometers to get to the actual bridge. The weather was great. The shopping was pleasurable for both of us and we got to see a few new places we



By
Angela Tyler

hadn't been before.

On the first night we stayed in Rochester and I was delighted to find out what a nice city it is. We were planning on staying there the second night and take the Breeze high speed ferry across Lake Ontario back to Toronto, that was until we found out it ceased operations.

So with that, we decided to go off the beaten path and take roads less travelled back to Ontario. I have absolutely no problem reading maps in Canada. I have no problem with directions or knowing which way is north, south, east or west when travelling. However, once I cross the 49th parallel, my sense of direction basically goes down the drain. The Dude has found this out the hard way several times.

My map reading skills are frustrating for him, especially when we are coming up to a split in the road and he's almost begging me to make a decision as to which way we are supposed to go. "Can you just pull over and take a look at this and see

what you think?" I asked him on Saturday. "Where do you think I can pull over? Just tell me which way," he responded in angst. "I think to the right," I replied with hesitation.

Once again, I had success in my screwed-up sense of direction. And, once again, I was able to head ourselves into yet another seedy area of town. In almost every place we have been in the U.S., I have single-handedly been able to find the "ghetto" as the Dude describes it. One time it was really scary. We were in Detroit at around midnight. There we were, lost Canadians with an Ontario licence plate, and I had to go into an all night convenience store that had bars on the windows to ask for directions.

Luckily, it was a Sunday afternoon this time when I found the "ghetto." As we somehow found our way out, I noticed a sign on a funeral home. The Dude said I had to get a picture of it and maybe send it into the Tonight Show for their headlines and odd photo segments. With a quick U turn, we were suddenly in front of the AMIGONE funeral home.

When I told my sister about it, she thought it must be a joke and

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THE NEW TANNER
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373 Queen Street East, Unit 1
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
email: 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
Rebecca Ring

Advertising and Circulation

Marie Shadbolt Bruce Cargill

Composing

Danielle McIsaac

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