

Chong chair of committee

Michael Chong, Wellington-Halton Hills MP, was elected Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology yesterday. Chong was nominated by Brian Masse of the New Democratic Party and his nomination received the unanimous consent of the other members of the committee.

"Committees are the work horses of Parliament. It's an honour to be entrusted as the chair of this important body," said Chong. He added, "I'm looking forward to working with all members and parties to ensure the proper functioning of a productive committee."

After passing the routine motions that will govern the committee, the committee agreed to resume the study on Canadian Science and Technology that was undertaken, but not completed, in the last Parliament. Chong said, "By completing this study we can start the work of the committee immediately and ensure that valuable witness testimony, heard in the last session, will not be wasted."

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology provides oversight over the activities and spending of Industry Canada. As well, the committee studies and reports on matters related to Canadian industry and technology capability, scientific research and development, telecommunications policy, investment and trade policy, and the rules and services that support the effective operation of the marketplace.

Budget limits hike

Halton Regional Council unanimously approved the 2009 Budget and Business Plan. With a 1.7 percent increase in the Region's portion of property taxes, the increase is one of the lowest in the Province of Ontario.

The key drivers for this year's budget included maintaining service levels, responding to the community and investing in capital infrastructure.

The 1.7 percent increase allows for some needed new programming, such as the creation of a youth psychiatric service, 150 new subsidized child care spaces, enhanced waste diversion programs, and the servicing of new employment lands to assist in new job creation. For more information about the 2009 Budget, dial 311 or 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866) or TTY 905-825-9833 or visit Halton Region's website at www.halton.ca



WHEN I SAY "MSB" YOU SAY "NOT FOR SALE": Allison Jones took to the bullhorn to lead the crowd in some chants at the rally held on the MSB grounds on the Family Day holiday. Some 300 people showed up to protest the Halton School Board's decision to make MSB land surplus. — Traci Gardner Photo

Schools are more than buildings

To the editor

On behalf of the MSB School Council I would like to thank the citizens for Acton for answering our SOS to Save Our Space at MSB. This is not just an MSB school issue but a community wide concern.

We thank the over 70 people who attended the press conference at the Acton Arena on February 2. Thanks to the mayor and local councillors, the Acton Soccer Club, the hundreds of people who have signed up for the 'MSB Not For Sale' Facebook page, the people who have emailed us their support, and those who have already taken the time to sign the petitions.

As a school council we were stunned when the news came to us about the

proposed sale and that it was a done deal. It's as if we have been found guilty and sentenced without a chance to plead our case in front of a judge. Why didn't the process allow our trustees to consult with constituents before a motion was made?

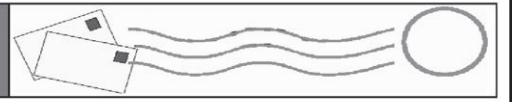
The Ontario Government tells us on their own websites that, "Schools are more than just buildings", that, "Land is a Terrible Thing to Waste," and that the government "aims to help bring about a physical activity and community sport culture." How does the government support these statements on one hand and the allow a school board to sell valuable green space that is used for Quality Day Fitness (QDF), recess, soccer and other sports and fitness activities by the school and community? How can this land be deemed surplus?

If the land was being sold to directly help our aging school in need of desperate repair, the bitter pill might have been easier to swallow for residents; but the funds will be pooled and sent south of the 401.

I encourage other parents and members of the community to voice their opinions – loudly – to the HDSB, trustees and the Minister of Education.

*Melissa Secord
MSB School
Council Chair*

Letters



Land sale impractical

To the editor

I have followed the public dialogue on this issue with great interest. It is difficult to avoid an emotional response to the divestiture of a long time public asset. It is well over 50 years since I first played on these lands. I learned how to hit a golf ball on those fields – not well but often. In 1962, I played on the last high school senior football team that Acton fielded on those same lands. Almost everyone who has grown up in Acton since 1954 has enjoyed activities on these same fields. They were always intended for recreational use by the community.

When these lands were acquired by the Town there was a single community interest and it is a quirk that their ownership ended up being vested with an agency whose interests go well beyond those of the local community.

Regardless, divorcing oneself from the emotion, the prospect of selling these lands is totally impractical. As a student of economics I know that you don't sell assets into a falling market when their value is low and falling with a declining economy. As a land developer in Acton I know that these lands have no servicing allocation and the Council acting

responsibly will not automatically grant servicing capacity ahead of projects already in line.

As a land developer who holds land in the Greenbelt, I know that the boundary of Acton is frozen and that means existing recreational properties should be preserved. I also know that given these factors in combination with the strong feelings within the community, that no informed developer is likely to buy this property under the existing circumstances.

This proposal has not been well thought out. The decision has been made for convenience and it reflects the "quick fix" attitude that is pervading too many public agency decisions at the moment. It is simply a bad business decision and it is a bad decision for the community. As such it should be reversed. Alternative ways to accomplish the goals of the Board should be found or the Board should do what the whole world is doing now and postpone wishes and wants until they can be afforded without damaging the framework of day to day life in the community through the sacrifice of valuable assets unnecessarily.

*Sincerely
Fred Dawkins*

Entertainment inappropriate

To the editor,

There is always a reason to celebrate Valentine's Day and what better way than to gather with friends, family and other loved ones at a local dance. I saw the advertisement for the Valentine's Day Dance at the Acton Legion in the newspaper and thought it would be fun to organize an event for neighbours to get out and dance off the winter blues. I purchased 20 tickets for the event and they were accepted with excitement. In the end we had to purchase additional tickets at the door to accommodate all in attendance.

The event started off in a very positive way with friends and neighbors gathering and catching up with each other. The Legion ensured two more tables were set up so the group could sit together. The D.J. was playing old music that was enjoyable not only for our large group but the other people in attendance. The bartenders were courteous and very friendly and the night was underway!

Just around midnight the organizer of the event announced there was going to be some entertainment for those in attendance. It was at this time a transvestite took center stage for some lip synching of numerous Celine Dion songs. In addition to the lip synching the transvestite also indulged the crowd with opening "his" shirt slightly to show the

crowd some of "his" assets.

It was at this time the people in attendance stopped dancing, stopped socializing and it became very clear how disappointed everyone was. The dance floor was empty and the smiles that were so

predominant at the beginning of the evening started to fade.

If you are a person that supports this type of entertainment there are places to go. The Acton Legion is not one of those places and I'm sure many of my fellow Acton residents would agree. This "surprise" entertainment was in extremely poor taste and it disrespected not only those in attendance but the Legion itself.

I approached the organizer of the event and communicated my disappointment on behalf of our friends and family and I believe it was well received, however it does not exclude the fact that the evening was ruined and the party was very quickly over.

Not only did I feel embarrassed for some of the friends and family that travelled from out of town for this event, but I also felt bad for the older people that were clearly having a very good time and were completely shocked by the form of entertainment provided.

I will continue to support local venues and organized events because I think it's positive for the community and it's residents, however I would hope that any future surprise entertainers would be communicated long before tickets are purchased.

*Angela Cummings,
Acton*



Unknown odour

Acton firefighters using their multi-gas detecting devices were unable to find a source for an unknown odour that was reported in the area of Mill Street West and Park Avenue at 9:36 last Wednesday night. Halton Region staff also checked the area for sewer gas, but found nothing.

Car exhaust

A Poplar Avenue homeowner was advised to air out his carbon monoxide detector before putting it back into use after the device activated at 6:17 last Monday night.

The homeowner had been working on his car in the garage and exhaust fumes were drawn into the house, setting off the alarm.