

EDITORIAL

with Frances Niblock

Library more than a book warehouse

Acton's new library will not be a warehouse for books, magazines and CDS – staff wants it to be a warm, welcoming place featuring a two-sided fireplace, a self-service checkout option and relaxed, comfortable atmosphere.

The details – the colours, furnishings, landscaping – will be presented to the public at a community open house on January 28 at the River Street branch.

Library staff envision a \$3.5-million facility that will be a fun, interesting, relaxing and comfortable – a community hub. The hope is that the facility, to be built to the east of the existing branch, will feel have a warm, welcoming living room feel, but still be functional as a library.

That's a very different approach from my earliest experiences with the library, a Book Mobile that used to pull into the parking lot of the Applewood Acres shopping plaza every Friday evening.

Cramped, with a limited collection because of the size, never-the-less the Book Mobile was where words became important to me. My library card opened up the world, helped by librarians who also loved books and words.

Going to the main library in Cooksville was a rare treat – usually triggered by a school project – but I remember it felt cold and sterile compared to the revamped book bus.

The new Acton library will be anything but cold and sterile.

Thanks to stimulus funding from the federal and provincial governments, which each will pay one-third of the cost with the Town picking up the last third, Acton will have a state-of-the-art library – fully accessible, energy efficient and geared to the demands of a growing population.

Now is the chance to comment on the plans – to have your say in how the facility will look and operate.

If you can't get to the open house, the proposed plans will be on display at the River Street branch, ensuring that everyone can comment on or question the design.



OLYMPIAN EFFORT

With help from Acton's Eileen Quackenbush, Rallis Family Restaurant owner George Rallis is into the Olympic spirit in a big way, decorating his eatery with Olympic torch relay photos and other displays in advance of the 2010 games that begin next month in Vancouver.

– Frances Niblock photo

Imagine a brighter 21st century

By David Suzuki with Faisal Moola



In our short time on Earth, we humans have emerged from a chaotic world, imposing order and meaning in myriad ways, imagining the world into being. That was our great gift. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, will we prove ourselves to be imaginative beings capable of creating a better world?

Our challenge is to imagine a world where our wealth is in human relations and where we learn to live in balance with the rest of nature. By imagining a future, we can make it happen – as we always have.

If we continue, though, to set human borders and the economy as our highest priorities, we will never come to grips with the destructiveness of our activities and institutions.

In imagining a better future, we must open ourselves to the idea of change. And we'd do well to remember that people with vision have been overturning outmoded ways of thinking and acting throughout our brief history on this Earth – often in the face of great resistance. It wasn't long ago that people in countries such as the U.S. believed slavery was an economic necessity and that

abolishing it would destroy the economy and way of life of its "free" citizens.

As far as the cost and the speed of acting in our own best interests, consider how quickly the U.S. was able to build its space program after the Russians launched Sputnik I in 1957. In putting tremendous energy, thought, and resources into getting people onto the moon, the U.S. also sparked innovations such as 24-hour television news channels, cellphones, and GPS navigation.

On the environmental front, world leaders came together in Montreal in 1987 to confront the effect humans were having on the ozone layer with our use of chlorofluorocarbons. The international treaty they signed used trade sanctions and incentives to get countries to phase out the use of chemicals that were contributing to the depletion of the ozone layer. And that agreement allowed developing countries to take longer to phase out CFCs because the industrialized world had disproportionately contributed to the problem.

We really do have to think big – to imagine what a future that

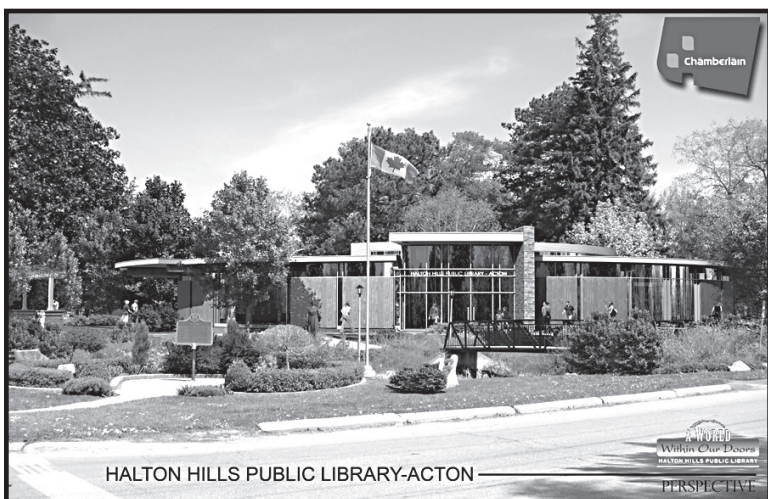
offers the most good to the most people and to all life on this planet would look like. Obviously, reducing poverty, conflict, and human-rights abuses is paramount. Environmental problems exacerbate those issues and so must also be dealt with. Part of the problem is that many of our political leaders are stuck in the mindset that constant economic growth is essential.

For example, consider what Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in a speech to South Korea's National Assembly in late 2009: "Without the wealth that comes from growth, the environmental threats, the developmental challenges and the peace and security issues facing the world will be exponentially more difficult to deal with."

But with constant growth comes depletion of and increasing competition for scarce resources, as well as more waste; in other words, increased environmental threats, developmental challenges, and peace and security issues.

Constant growth is just not possible in a finite world with finite resources. Our focus on constant economic growth also leads to some bizarre anomalies. War and natural disasters, for example, can

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