

Our Readers Write

Turner turns chairman's head

Dear Editor:

Re: Open letter to Garth Turner
As you might imagine, I follow the activities at Queen's Park and Parliament Hill with more than a passing interest, as decisions made at those levels of government have significant impact on the level of government that I have the pleasure to lead. As a result, the impact ultimately falls on the beleaguered taxpayer from whom we receive all our revenue in one form or another.

In an attempt to keep abreast of these activities, I spend a lot of time tracking through the various media, not least of which is your newspaper.

Setting aside the political issues, the conclusions of your columnists, editorial writers and the various letters to the editor (most of which are partisan), one observation seems beyond contradiction:

• that one of our elected representatives is leading the pack in at least one particular area.

You may like him or dislike him, agree or disagree with him, but you can't deny that he communicates regularly — with columns, open letters, and most importantly, frequent public meetings. I'm sure he's had more public meetings scattered throughout his riding in his time in office than most of the other members combined. I am referring, of course, to Garth Turner, MP for Halton/Peel.

I've had the opportunity to be in attendance at several of these meetings. Contrary to what some think, he's shown me no evidence that he is just an apologist for his government. Rather, he had often agreed with the criticism directed at his party and bravely soldiers on seeking input from all and carrying the message back to his caucus and to Cabinet.

He appears somewhat battle scarred and shellshocked at times and most readers perceive the frustration and cynicism that sometimes leaks through his columns.

While some may think that this letter itself makes me guilty of partisanship, I do plead guilty to admiring his pluck and determination to give his constituents open forums to give reports and get reports.

On that report card alone he gets an A+ from me and I'm sure most of his constituents.

R. Frank Bean
Regional Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer
Regional Municipality of Peel

Seniors matter more than parks

Dear Editor:

My mother is a resident at Halton Centennial Manor in Milton. Although the facility is not as "posh" as some of the more recently built homes, the nursing staff is outstanding. During my mother's three years as a resident, she has been treated with patience, good care and genuine love.

I am concerned to see that of late, the facility is seriously under-staffed and the morale of the staff is extremely low. The nursing staff is overworked and unable to adequately meet the constant needs of the elderly in their care. People are increasingly unwilling to do this often unpleasant job for the relatively poor wages offered.

I have heard that outside workers

have been offered 6.7 per cent increase in their new contracts, office workers 6 per cent and the nursing staff only 2.3 per cent increase in wages. This is a disgrace.

The work of the nursing staff in a home for the aged is often very difficult and very depressing. Many old people are not able to speak or care for their most basic needs. Many are mentally and emotionally incapable of normal behaviour. It takes a "saint" to do this job well.

When we offer the nursing staff such relatively poor wage increases, are we really saying that plants and grass and roads come before our aged? Outside workers need a decent wage but our nurses do, too.

We will all be old one day. Let's be sure our aged are treated at least as well as our parks.

Grace Halasz
Don Mills, Ont.

What price for children's safety?

Dear Editor:

On Oct. 25, the Halton Board of Education had an opportunity to vote to review their existing transportation policy. This policy was last reviewed in 1985 and prior to that, in 1979. It was deeply disappointing to see the board vote irresponsibly to defer this sorely needed review yet another year — a case of voting first and asking questions later.

The present transportation policy raises questions around the safety of very young children, and the real inconveniences put upon high school age children. The Halton board's transportation policy expects children in Kindergarten to Grade 2 to walk up to 1.6 km to school; children in Grade 3-8 to walk up to 3.2 km to school; and high school students to walk up to 4.8 km to school. It is only when they live beyond these distances that they can expect to be bused.

A meeting of more than 180 Glen Abbey parents held last June brought out the fact quite clearly that all of these parents felt that these distances were unacceptable for Halton's younger children. The Glen Abbey Residents' Association of more than 1,760 members supported the concerns of these parents and along with them urged the board to vote for a review of its transportation policy.

No matter how safe a route might appear to be, to expect a four- or five-year-old in Kindergarten to walk 1.6 km (1 mile) or a seven- or eight-year-old in Grade 3 to walk 3.2 (2 miles) is seen as inappropriate and as exposing children to situations where poor decisions on their part could put their safety in jeopardy.

In spite of support from some of our local Oakville trustees to review the policy, the majority of the Board took the stance that a review would lead to an unwanted and politically-feared increase in board expenditures.

It will be dark day in Halton if this board decides to save money at the expense of some Grade 3 child's safety. A look at the Halton Separate School Board and the Peel Board of Education's transportation policies show they have addressed these concerns and put children's safety first. For example, in Peel no child below Grade 9 has to walk more than (one mile) to school.

Drue Marriott, Chair, Parents Concerned About Busing
Brian W. Bell, Director, Glen Abbey Residents' Association

Complete alterations made in court room

Thurs. Sept. 22, 1864, Milton West — Those who attended the last Quarter Sessions, would notice the great changes made in the interior of the Court Room.

The County Court House, completed in 1855 when Halton and Wentworth separated, has been largely unchanged in its first nine years.

In the Court Room, however, County Council last March, saw the need for changes and its committee on Jail and Court House examined the County Buildings and found "that the present arrangement of tables and seats in the Court Room is cumbersome and inconvenient; that the windows in the Court Room and Jury Room require considerable repair and the prisoners Dock removed to a more convenient place". County Council accepted the recommendation and directed that a proper person be appointed to superintend the alterations under the direction of the committee members, William Clay, Esquering, James McGuffin, Milton, and Warden Robert Miller, Nelson.

The clumsy reporters' desks, which formerly took up so much space, have been replaced by commodious forms, with sloping backs. It was hard to imagine what the original intention was in placing a table before everyone in court, unless it was designed for lawyers and reporters. By the new arrangements 200 persons more can be accommodated with seats, whereas by the former absurd division only 36 could sit at the tables.

The bar, instead of being so far off from the court that the prisoner could scarcely hear what was said, or communicate with the counsel, except with great inconvenience, has been placed close to their lawyers' table. A prisoner can now have that consideration and fair play which British law contemplates giving him.

A gallery has been made so the space below is so much gained. There is now a central aisle leading to the grand jury room, which has been provided with a ventilator (heat), and a space in front has been prepared as a room



Moments in History

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for witnesses.

It's good to see signs of progress and the willingness to adapt to the times, which the above noted changes reflect.

We are amid times of great change and those changes are not only seen locally, as reflected by the above noted changes, but in our senior government as well.

The "Great Coalition" government, formed following the defeat of the Tache-Macdonald government on a vote of censure in June, is leading the talk of a British North American confederation. It is hardly a figure of speech to say that Parliament and the country were electrified at hearing the announcement that George Brown and John A. Macdonald had agreed to sit side by side in the same Cabinet in that coalition.

Macdonald and Cartier have outlined the arguments in favour of a British North America confederation, while the Maritime provinces have been discussing a Maritime Union.

The Maritime and Canadian delegates met at the Charlottetown Conference and later at Province House, Halifax on Sept. 12 and they have now agreed to meet at Quebec Oct. 12 to work out the final details of Confederation.

MPP John White is representing Halton in this parliament during its sessions at Quebec.

Eightieth in a series of facts, sometimes sprinkled with imagination to reflect Milton's past. Research assistance by Jack Charlton and Alex Cooke.

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