

COMMENT

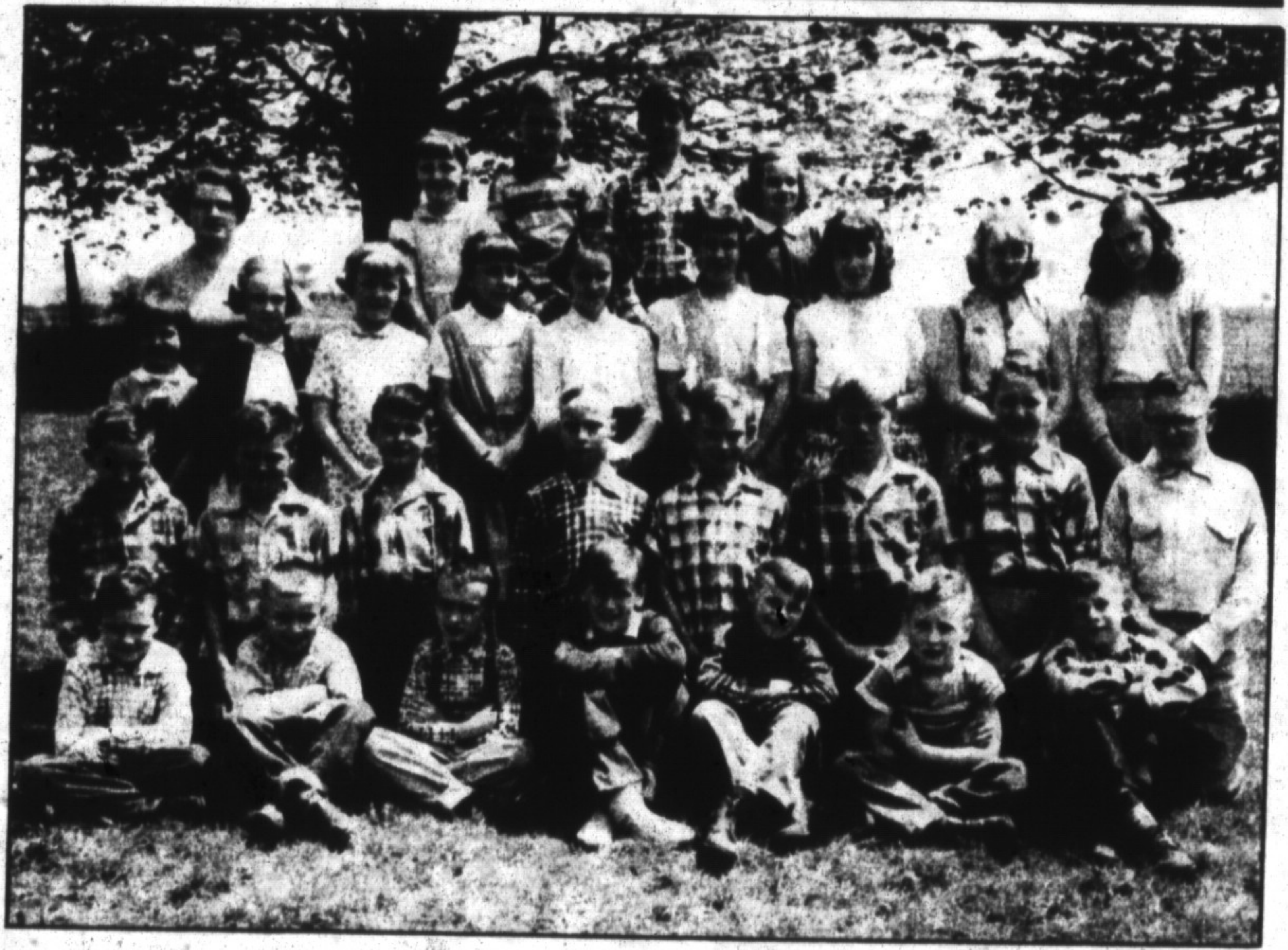
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LOOKING BACK



Class of '57

This is the class of 1957 at S. S. No. 4, Nassagaweya. Teacher Eleada Thomson was among those who attended a school reunion recently held at Campbellville Lions Club Hall. Students in the class photo are from left to right (back row) Ms Thompson; Jean Ann Bewley; Wayne Gates; Sylvio Valenti; Doris Moffat; (third row) Susan Ward; Shirley Frank; Helen Richardson; Judy Crisp; Darlene Wheeler; Heather Gates; Carol Freeman; Lorraine Richardson; Grace Proper (second row) John Bewley; John Gates; David Ward; Jim Croft; Murray Fatt; Herman Proper; David Griffiths; Brian Cargill; (front row) Reid Frank; Dean Moffat; Bryan McKersie; Bob Proper; John Croft; Kenny Gates; Carman Valenti.

Phase-in warranted

Town finance director Jim McQueen has a good head on his shoulders and is a helpful, likeable public servant. But we feel his judgement was flawed when he suggested market value assessment (MVA) should be implemented all at once.

Monday Mr. McQueen warned that if the school boards and local municipalities go along with a Halton regional plan to phase in MVA over four years, no one will be satisfied. He reasoned that since those getting a tax break won't enjoy its full benefits for four years, they'll be just as angry as those who are being asked to absorb a tax hike.

That may be true, but we believe another concern outweighs that inequity at present. It is that few people can genuinely afford to be paying much more for anything right now.

Put simply, the most responsible thing to do is delay the impact of the full weight of market value assessment, so those who are being asked to pay additional property taxes have time to plan for the extra burden.

Some may argue the actual increases aren't onerous. On average across Halton, property tax increases under MVA will be \$291, while decreases will be \$212 per household.

But there are other factors to consider in this time of economic uncertainty. One, many of the homes that have appreciated in value (supposedly, anyway) are in older sections of municipalities, the core area of Oakville being a good example. These homes are often occupied by senior citizens, and seniors generally live on fixed incomes.

Fixed incomes are derived from investments, and most investments are performing poorly right now. So the seniors, who should be entitled to a break anyway because they live on investment interest, deserve even more of a breather now.

Two, MVA is based on the premise that property taxes should reflect the true market value of a house. This is all well and good if one treats one's house as a long-term appreciating investment, but most seniors aren't doing that. They treat their homes as a place to live.

The MVA rationale prevails in the same manner for commercial real estate. The thinking goes that businesses in more desirable areas, as evidenced by price pressure for the property, should pay extra taxes. Fine, under the usual circumstances. But in today's dormant economic climate it's difficult to pitch such a rationale for paying a premium. Business volumes, generally, just don't warrant it.

Mr. McQueen, and many others, argue that if MVA is a fairer tax than the current one, which is complex and inexact, it should be fully implemented immediately. But just how much fairer is MVA?

Oakville treasurer Michelle Seguin has argued that the system MVA replaced, known as equalized assessment, would have eventually done the same thing as MVA. While the detractors of equalized assessment don't like it because it's complex and prone to calculation mistakes, they've rarely argued that it's radically unfair. They just think MVA is more equitable, and easier to administrate. So it's more a question of degree than absolute.

Also, MVA assessment is changeable, in fact it could change quickly. Opponents of MVA have argued that if 1992 was used for the initial MVA benchmark property worth figure, rather than 1988, it would have been Burlington that absorbed the lion's share of the increase, rather than Oakville. So MVA is completely subject to the often unpredictable influences of supply and demand.

There's enough of a tax change going on currently. We recognize, as Mr. McQueen warned, that a phase-in period may not turn out to be practical, given all the players involved (the school boards, the four area municipalities, Halton Region). But we think a phase-in would be prudent.

PAGES OF THE PAST

One Year Ago

From the October 9, 1991 issue

North End Nissan, a business owned by Norm and Donna Coulter was named 1991 Business of the Year by the Milton Chamber of Commerce. For 30 years the Coulters have owned the family car dealership. The business received the award, not only for being a successful dealership, but also for serving as one of Milton's best cheerleaders. A sign board in front of North End Nissan was known for highlighting the biggest community events of the week. The Coulter family was also well known for making charitable donations and volunteering time and energy to worthwhile causes. North End Nissan had also recently been recognized as one of six out of 2,400 firms in Halton and Peel to receive an award from the Ontario Accident Prevention Association for a nearly perfect accident prevention record over the past 20 years.

\$9,000 was raised for the United Way at their Robin Hood Dinner/Auction. The event, which was the kick off to a month-long campaign, was a success according to organizer Marie Sutcliffe. Volunteers had decorated Halton Hills Banquet Hall to resemble Sherwood Forest for the night and the guests dressed in keeping with the Robin Hood theme. The most merry man of the evening was councillor Bill Johnson who won an Air Canada trip for two to any destination in Europe.

20 Years Ago

From the October 11, 1972 issue

A mob of people, estimated at 3,000 jammed into Hopedale Mall in Oakville as the Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau made an appearance during his election campaign. Only one in 50 actually got close enough to the Prime Minister to shake his hand but the excitement was

in the air. It took many Oakville police officers and Trudeau's own security force to guide the PM through the mall. The crowd was generally supportive except for a few demonstrators who stayed on the sidelines waving protest signs and shouting taunts at Trudeau.

Two local youngsters had done their part to help crippled children when they collected \$43.02 for the crippled children's telethon on CFTO television. The mother of the boys, Rusty and Stephen Callahan said police received a call and paid a visit to the boys. Apparently a caller had felt the boys were keeping the money. However the visiting officer recognized the brothers as the boys who had earlier returned \$30 they found on Main Street. Mrs. Callahan assured everyone that the boys donated all the money to the deserving parties.

A festival of praise to dedicate the main part of the building at the Bezek Centre in Nassagaweya was being planned. There was to be entertainment provided by the Alderwood United Church Choir of Toronto and the Hakamu youth singers of Aurora, complete with guitars and orchestra.

50 Years Ago

From the October 8, 1942 issue

A large crowd turned out to a concert given by the Lorne Scots Band at the Princess Theatre. They performed a very fine program.

Repairs had been made to several sections of the sidewalk by municipal employees, and several sections of new sidewalk had been laid in town during the past weeks which made quite an improvement to the appearance of the town.

The Black and White Holstein show was held in the Milton arena. More than 150 prize-winning cattle from local fairs competed for the regional championship.

PUD

BY STEVE NEASE

