

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

Housing still the albatross



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

Watching the start of the spring sitting of the legislature, it is hard to find words to describe the mood of the place.

Expectant might do.

Thanks to the London North byelection result, the opposition New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives feel the Liberal government finally has developed some chinks in its impressive armor.

On the other hand, Premier David Peterson publicly shrugged off his party's loss of the seat as an aberration.

Privately, however, the Liberals know they have to get a better grip on the public agenda. The backbench expects it and has told the leadership so.

Sunday shopping is the issue where the Liberals are taking the most visible hammering. The lead-off questions from both opposition leaders dealt with it.

The NDP managed to convince the Speaker to allow an emergency debate on Sunday shopping.

SIMPLE MATTER

But the Liberals' plan - to turn over to municipalities the responsibility for making a decision on Sunday shopping - is still essentially a simple matter.

One is either for it or against it.

Part of the reason the issue has such high visibility right now is that opponents of Sunday shopping are well organized and financed - not to mention noisy.

Some suggest the Liberals handling of Sunday shopping was the key issue in London North.

But once Sunday shopping becomes a municipal responsibility, the debate should move on to the lower level of government.

The genuinely tough issue facing the Liberals is housing, which has more tenacles than an octopus.

-In many cities and towns, there is just no rental accommodation.

-In the Toronto area, there is no housing available at a price within the reach of many Ontarians.

-Most developers aren't the least interested in building either more rental buildings or "cheap" housing.

Housing Minister Chaviva Hosek, who probably wonders what she did wrong to make Premier David Peterson give her such a thankless job, is probably the single most besieged minister here.

Recruited personally by Premier Peterson, Hosek was just the kind of bright, young, female candidate the Liberals wanted centre stage in the last campaign.

Surviving a bruising nomination battle and charges that she was parachuted into her Oakwood riding, she rode the Peterson coattails to victory over a long-time NDP incumbent.

She's been in trouble ever since. On the first day of this sitting, she announced the introduction of new regulations limiting the conversion of apartment buildings to hotels.

Unfortunately, she did it in the hallway to a group of reporters rather than in the legislature itself, which irritated the New Democrats and Conservatives no end.

The NDP's Mike Braugh responded with a hilarious lecture directed at the government benches - using a map of the legislature as a prop - pointing out the assembly chamber where she should have made the announcement.

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



I'll go back for the bread...
you tell him about the eight items!

Employee's role great in business operation



Your Business

By DIANNE MALEY
Business Analyst
Thomson News Service

In an age of increased competition, companies are struggling to improve customer service. Unfortunately, the message is slow in trickling down to those who are supposed to provide the service - store clerks, cashiers, bank tellers.

A trip to the post office might lead one to believe that postal workers use slow, reluctant service to express their dissatisfaction with their employer. The same could be said of most store clerks, whose favorite saying seems to be "It's not my department." The line is delivered as they waltz off for coffee.

Bankers have their problems, too, including scheduling. You can't blame the tellers for wanting to leave for lunch at 12. The noon-hour rush, though, results in bank line-ups that stretch half-way around the block.

But the fact remains that branch banks are where a bank's image is made; helpful and knowledgeable people at a branch make for loyal customers.

To this end, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, which suffered low employee morale in the past, began publishing its employees' annual report, in which it subtly pushes the merits of customer service.

BIG CHANGES
Creating a separate annual report for employees is a good idea, although one may wonder if it is necessary when the bank has its own internal newspaper, The News, and a new video network, CIBC Live.

But it is necessary. The bank is trying to do something that rarely succeeds - change its corporate culture. Employee support is crucial.

Turning around the battleship has been a slow process, but the Commerce seems to be succeeding.

The annual report shows what the bank is doing right.

It makes financial statements comprehensible. The profit and loss statement is divided into two sections: where the money came from (revenue and other income) and where the money went (expenses, dividends and profit).

The balance sheet becomes: what we own and what we owe - to customers in the form of deposits, and to shareholders in the form of funds invested by shareholders and earnings held for shareholders. As annual reports go, the Commerce report to employees is rather dull to look at. But it demonstrates, with typical bankers' restraint, that the bank's management is trying to pull its 40,000 employees together into one big profit-making enterprise, with everyone moving in the same direction.

DOES IT WORK?

The bank's newspaper and video network likely will do more than the annual report to infuse the institution with a new spirit. Everyone makes fun of office newsletters but practically everyone reads them.

But do such attempts to foster corporate spirit bring the desired results?

By themselves, it's unlikely that reports and newsletters would help much. Merely urging employees to give better service is not enough. On the other hand, persuading people that the health of their enterprise is in their hands could bring surprisingly good results. Attempts at employee communications usually fall short of the mark; sooner or later, something - a branch closing, a big takeover - will catch employees by surprise. Even so, the Commerce is on the right track.

Skeptical as employees may be, they appreciate management's attempts to include them in the business.

Tempers flare over proposal for Campbellville



Staff Comment

By BRIAN MACLEOD

The fight by Campbellville residents to "save" their village turned nasty at Halton Region April 13.

Tempers flared as residents prepared for "D Day" - the day Halton made the decision on how much reconstruction the Guelph Line in Campbellville will undergo.

Residents have been fighting the improvements furiously for about a year. Last summer Toronto Sun business columnist and Campbellville resident Garth Turner appeared before the Region's Planning and Public Works Committee claiming Halton was planning to do extensive reconstruction on the road without consulting the residents.

A "fact sheet" circulated around the village apparently contained some inaccuracies and some regional councillors got their noses all out of joint about that.

So it was off to a rocky start. It all came to a head in Wednesday's three-and-a-half hour discussion.

By comparison, the rest of the agenda took less than five minutes to complete.

Most residents agree the road needs some work but they say public meetings and questionnaires on the work were "slanted" in favor of the Region.

One resident wrote: "go build in Burlington and satisfy that devilish urge."

Residents also want to preserve their tourist industry which brings in about 5,000 people on Sundays.

After most of Wednesday's 11 delegations were through criticizing Halton's reconstruction plan one resident began a point by saying: "I don't want to offend those of you who

may live in Burlington..." but he was interrupted by an angry Regional Chairman Pete Pomeroy who said: "Why not? You've offended everybody else." Mr. Pomeroy took the first opportunity to apologize for the remark.

Phrases like "unique, quaint, rural atmosphere and jewel of Halton" were used to describe the village by residents.

Burlington Councillor Walter Mulkevic said businessmen are just trying to preserve their tourist industry using the rural atmosphere as a "mask".

Oakville's Liz Behrens said groups passed around false information creating hysteria.

Milton's Bill Johnson handed over a confidential paper to a delegation in the middle of the meeting.

Oakville's Fred Oliver and Mr. Turner stared each other down. When Coun. Oliver asked Mr. Turner if he would go along with a proposal to remove 54 signs on Regional road allowances, Mr. Turner said: "Is this going to be another personal attack?"

"If you want to get rough I can get rough," Coun. Oliver replied. Committee Chairman Pat McLaughlin threatened to lock the two in a closet to settle their differences.

After Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson chastized Mr. Turner for his "abrasive" behavior Coun. Pam Sheldon introduced a motion to divert the \$1 million to other projects in Halton.

When the motion lost, Coun. Sheldon said she was "pleased" it did. She just wanted to provoke discussion.

So what's the upshoot of all this? The committee voted for the whole project except one provision for parking.

Oh, and if your construction company is thinking of vying for the tender - beware. If you accidentally knock over the wrong tree you'll fork over \$5,000 to the Region as a penalty.

The debate continues at council on Wednesday.

Poets' Corner

It's Over, I Hope

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a poem submitted for publication by Hope Simmons, a Georgetown resident, and a student at Notre Dame School in Brampton.

IT'S OVER, I HOPE

If it's over, let it be over forever.
I don't want anything ruined anymore.
You and me, we are a team.
And let it be said, that people get along better together.
And together is the way we will be.

Let the air clear of all this fog
And live our lives in fresh clean air.
Never look beyond your soul, to see only hatred,
But look beyond for the light of all lights.

I love to watch the stars twinkle at night,
And see your bright face beside mine.
As the breeze of love brushes by us,

Just hold me in your arms, and hold tight forever.

Skies are not always blue
And my heart is not always in the right place.
But as tomorrow arrives, I can realize that a bond so near,
Will shatter only if not cared for,
And a memory is never lost, until losing it is harder.

Think, and listen, you can hear the whispers of the birds,
And hear the sweet voice of two in love.
They will always be there but do not take advantage,
Because it will take advantage of you.

Tomorrow, is the day to remember,
And today is a day to forget,
But do not live in the past,
Because there is a glorious future ahead.