

Businesses must be aggressive

By BRIAN MacLEOD
Herald Staff

Halton Hills businesses will have to be aggressive if they want to take advantage of the Canada-US free trade deal, Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner says.

And it's not just big business that should jump on the free trade bandwagon, said Mr. Turner at his first free trade seminar in Georgetown recently.

"The small and medium-sized businesses will make a mistake if they assume it's only the big guys (who will benefit)," he said. "The small and medium size manufacturers will make or break the Free Trade Agreement."

In the hills

Parents meet

Bishop Reding Parent's Association will meet Monday, March 6 to discuss Teenage Sexuality. This meeting will be held at Bishop Reding Secondary School with guest speakers Lionel and Anna Friegel.

Such a topic is of concern to many parents and teenagers so consider attending this meeting which will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Volunteer call

North Halton Distress and Information centre needs new volunteers to help maintain the 24-hour-a-day community service.

Training will begin Monday evening, March 13, at 7:30 p.m.

If you can give four hours per week, are a good listener and would like to help, call 877-1211 for more information.

Diabetes meeting

The Brampton and District Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association will hold its next General Meeting on Monday, March 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the Bramalea Lions Community Hall - 45 Avondale Blvd., in Brampton.

Speaking on "What is new in research" will be Bruce McCloud, author and nurse from Wellesley Hospital. Ms. McCloud is also on the Executive CDA National Division.

For additional information call 458-1648. Refreshments will be served.

During the half-day seminar, a room full of local business owners were taken through the complex steps needed to take advantage of the agreement by Canadian and American experts on importing and exporting goods.

Businesses must develop both an "offensive and defensive strategy" now that the deal is in effect, said Mr. Turner. Developing an intensive marketing strategy will help push Canadian products in the US and companies here will have to make sure their businesses are efficient on their own home territory to make sure "American companies can't come in and scoop you."

Many small companies in town feel they're not sophisticated enough to take advantage of the Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Turner said. To those businesses he says, "don't be shy. Don't assume you can't do it."

Admittedly, free trade "isn't going to pave the streets with gold," said Mr. Turner.

However, Southern Ontario businesses are just a few hours away from a market of five million people in the northern US, while the reverse situation offers

American businesses a market of only about five million, so it makes sense for Canadian businesses to become more aggressive, he said.

The Canadian government has formed a committee to look into the implications of the agreement here in Canada. The committee, headed by Bell Canada's Jean de Granpre will report on the necessary adjustments Canada will need to make. The committee will look into where jobs will be gained and lost and what the government should do to prepare for the effect of the reduction of tariffs over the next few years.

Here in Halton-Peel, Mr. Turner has set up a free trade committee headed by Limehouse farmer Frank Anthony. The committee will be travelling the riding in an attempt to act as a liaison between business, the public and government on the agreement.

Producers of grain and oil seeds in Canada will be able to take advantage of the agreement within the next two years, said Mr. Anthony. Those tariffs are among the first to come off.

In reverse, milk and poultry producers will have to keep an eye on American importers looking to compete in Canada, he said.

Tariffs gradually lifted

When the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement came into effect Jan. 1, tariffs on about 15 per cent of trade between the two countries were eliminated.

Products which had their tariffs dropped immediately include computers and accompanying equipment, some unprocessed fish, leather, yeast, vending machines, skates, paper-making machinery, some pork, fur garments, whisky, animal feeds, ferro alloys, needles, skis, warranty repairs and motorcycles.

Over the next 10 years, tariffs on the remaining goods will be dropped. Tariffs on some items will be dropped in five equal steps including subway cars, printed

materials, paints, aftermarket auto parts, chemicals, paper and paper products, furniture, hardwood plywood and most machinery.

Tariffs on the remaining goods will be dropped in 10 equal steps including most agricultural products, textiles and apparel, softwood plywood, railcars, steel, appliances, pleasure craft and tires.

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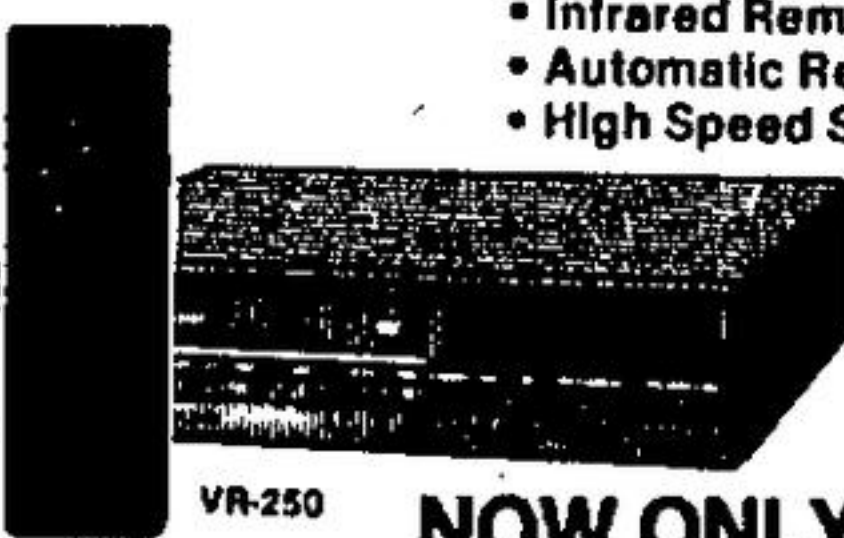
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