How to find the local B.I.A.

By MARGARET VINT Manager, Georgetown B.I.A.

This article is intended as a response to Mrs. Dawn Livingstone's letter to the editor (Sept. 6) as well as information for the entire community.

Not having spoken with Mrs. Livingstone, I do not know who she contacted or where she attempted to locate an address for "the downtown business association."

Although the term "downtown business association" is frequently used in reference to businesses in the downtown core, there is no "business association." However, there is a Business Improvement Area (B.I.A.)

The Business Improvement Area, in any Ontario town, is an area designated as such by its municipal council upon the enactment of a municipal bylaw. All businesses located within the boundaries of a business improvement area are subject to a B.I.A. levy in addition to business tax. A board of management for the business improvement area is responsible for the administration of the B.I.A. levy which is used toward beautification, maintenance and promotion of the area.

Because the B.I.A. is located within that portion of the town referred to as "Downtown Georgetown," by local residents, it is listed under Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area in both the white and yellow pages of the Bell Telephone Book, The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce 1989 Directory and Community Information Guide and The Locator. As well, it is on file with The Halton Hills Tourism Committee, The Regional Municipality of Halton, The Town of Halton Hills, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce and both local newspapers. The B.I.A. telephone number is 873-4970.

Among many, I too will miss Whimsy's, having watched it outgrow three premises. But we can only respect the decision of its owner, Sandi O'Connor, to leave the long hours of the retailer in favour of longer hours with family.

Over the last two years more than 20 businesses have chosen to locate within the business improvement area, e.g. Beeline Travel, David Dew - masseur, Up Up and Away, Steven Foster -

lawyer, The Final Touch, and The Milne Homecare Centre. Just beyond the B.I.A. boundaries, but in the general vicinity, others have located, e.g. My Generation and Starret and Starret C.A. It is good to see this growth since it brings more jobs and more people into the area. More people means a need for more parking. I have been informed that plans are being made for a parking study of the town.

In the past five years I have had numerous conversations about all types of parking areas within the business improvement area, with councillors, business owners, employees and members of the public, some of whom were visitors from Streetsville, Brampton, Guelph and Oakville among other towns. Following is what I heard.

Off-street free parking areas; behind the buildings on the east side of Main Street South, behind the Legion and behind the Downtown Professional Centre. Visitors were pleased to find "free parking downtown." Local residents agreed that they "prefer" to park as close as possible to where they are doing business.

Off-street metered parking lots; Church Street and Wesleyan Street, where all meters have a four hour time limit and the cost is 50 cents for four hours: The comments (from local residents) were quite varied here and ranged from "get rid of the meters" to "if the cost doubled it's still cheap parking." Those opposed to the meters, when asked if they would use these lots if parking was free, were divided - a) yes, b) only if they couldn't find anything closer to where they were going, c) probably not "who wants to walk that far?"

On-street one hour meters; Main Street South, Mill Street and Market Street: I acknowledge that there are those who are opposed to the on-street meters. However, considering the number of people coming into the area each day and knowing that not all have voiced an opinion, it is impossible to accurately assess percentages for or against on street meters.

It is my understanding that the meters were installed for some very good reasons, namely to encourage area employees, business owners and residents to use offstreet parking lots; make on-street parking available for those coming into the area to do quick chores (e.g. pick up or drop off an item) and to keep a flow of traffic.

The board of management for the B.I.A. has asked that serious consideration be given to its recommendation, passed along to town staff after the July board meeting, that the one-hour parking time limit be increased to two hours, for all on-street meters.

I know, from personal experience, that feeling of frustration most of you have when you return to your car and find a parking ticket on the windshield. You know your meter expired at, say, 10 minutes past the hour. You look at your watch which reads 13 minutes past the hour. You say to yourself, "I'm only three minutes over - and "she" gave me a ticket." However, please remember that "she" had no way of knowing at what time the meter expired and, whether three minutes or three "she" has the hours overdue, responsibility of issuing tickets for parking violations. We do know at what time the meter will expire and it is our responsibility to ensure that it does not expire while using that space. While shopping in the area, I have seen people park at meters, note the meter had expired and still walk away without putting in any coin.

The bylaw enforcement staff have the job of issuing tickets for all parking violations throughout the town, not just expired meters, e.g. illegal parking, in spaces reserved for the handicapped and in fire routes. It is not a pleasant job and one, I'm sure, that not many of us would choose to, or want to, do. But, somebody has to do it. I congratulate the girls for the manner in which they handle

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those rare occasions when verbally abused, having personally witnessed one.

It disturbs me greatly when hear of such comments as, "I'll never shop downtown again," usually having been made upon the receipt of a parking ticket. In addition to keeping the area pleasant and attractive, the business owners do their very best to provide the community with a wide variety of goods and services. Along with their staff they comprise a very concerned and very caring group of people to which you will always be very important people. Do you really want to penalize such a group of people? A group often called upon for sponsorships and donations? Or, are you just angry because you received a parking ticket at one of the meters? Could you have prevented that ticket? Think about it.

Please feel free to send your comments about the business improvement area to Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area, (the official name for the B.I.A.), P.O. Box 191, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario, L7G 4Y5 or hand them in to any business within the B.I.A. for passing along to me.

Discuss taxes with your M.P. Garth Turner

Two public meetings have been scheduled by Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner to hear submissions on the federal government's proposed nine per cent Goods and Services Tax.

A meeting has been set for Georgetown on Sept. 28 at 7 p.m. at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre. A meeting is also scheduled for Bolton on Sept. 26.

The Halton-Peel Tax Committee, headed by Caledon resident Colin MacKinnon and comprised of a number of area residents, will be making a submission within a few weeks to the House of Commons finance committee when it holds hearings into the GST. As part of the background for that submission, the meetings in Georgetown and Bolton will be held to garner public input, Mr. Turner said in a Sept. 11 press release.

The two meetings are in addition to the seven town hall meetings held by Mr. Turner in recent weeks - all of which concentrated heavily on the tax proposal and government spending.

Mr Turner is also publishing a "Taxpayer's Guide" to the Goods and Services Tax.



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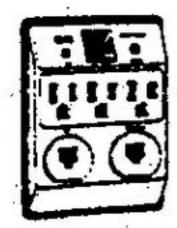
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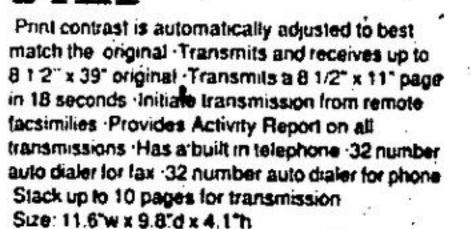
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