

No easy answers for land questions

The battle between Halton Hills residents Pam Sheldon and Giuseppe Gori over lands in the Speyside area raises questions for which there are no easy answers.

At the centre of this battle is Mr. Gori's request for the Niagara Escarpment Commission, (NEC), to include as part of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, (NEP), lands owned by Ms. Sheldon and 92 other property owners.

Mr. Gori claims he applied for the NEP amendment to protect the area from being quarried.

Ms. Sheldon describes Mr. Gori's request as a travesty, saying, "he has no rights on my property; it's morally indefensible what he is doing."

I don't agree the request is morally indefensible, since, as a citizen, he has the right to apply for the amendment.

If Mr. Gori's action is morally indefensible, then it follows it is also morally indefensible for the commission to allow citizens to make such a request.

I doubt Ms. Sheldon would agree with this description of the NEC, since she says her fight isn't with the commission; it's only with Mr. Gori.

While I disagree the requested amendment is morally indefensible, I do think Mr. Gori's action shows a lack of good faith.

Since the amendment will affect a large number of property owners, if ever approved, it would have been neighborly of Mr. Gori to first survey the affected residents on their opinion of the proposed amendment.

This approach would have also



Ben's Banter
by Ben Dummett

made sense in order to show the NEC whether the amendment has public support.

In defense of her position, Ms. Sheldon points out the NEC didn't deem it necessary to have the lands under question included in the plan when it was first drawn up, or

during the recent five-year plan review.

Ms. Sheldon reasons therefore, the Gori request is nothing more than a useless and expensive make-work project for NEC staff.

This point makes sense, when considered in context with the fact the lands have never before been included in the plan.

It will be interesting to see if the NEC decides to process Mr. Gori's application or reject it outright; deeming it a frivolous request.

However, it's unlikely the NEC would deem the request frivolous since Ms. Sheldon acknowledges the lands under question shouldn't be used for any large development such as a quarry.

Ms. Sheldon points out the amendment should be rejected because the area residents have always been environmentally aware.

Prior to the NEC's formation, the Speyside Ratepayers Association, of which Ms. Sheldon is a member, protected the area under question from being quarried, she said.

That being on record, Mr. Gori could counter with the idea that any new property owners who move into the area may not be as environmentally aware.

To which Ms. Sheldon could reply the only reason people move into the area is because they appreciate the rural landscape.

They would, therefore, do nothing to harm the natural setting. You are probably getting the point.

There are obviously no easy answers to this debate, but hopefully somewhere down the line, the two sides can arrive at an acceptable compromise.

Five year cycle is something to bank on

A few weeks ago I wrote about our leader's deep lack of economic understanding which will undermine our recovery and prepare the way for the recession of 1999.

During the same week when that column was published (Jan. 20 - Jan 25) we were granted a few macroscopic examples of the confusion which reigns in the mind of our leaders and the media.

First came poor Bob Rae speech to the Ontarians. Let me tell you that I actually like Bob Rae and respect his intellect and intentions. And if Rae, who, unlike other Premiers, did not play football without a helmet, is confused... we are in trouble.

Rae wants growth, and is willing to pay for growth with all the accumulated principles of his young political life. Rae is asking

for cuts, is scrapping programs to achieve fiscal stability, he wants higher taxes and looks to a Government generated public works program to get the economy going.

In other words, either by printing money or by taking money out of the private sector to start a government inspired and managed program of public works he hopes to get the private sector going again. Right Bob; first kill the horse than ask him to win the race.

Rae made one useful statement: his intention to manage change. But he obviously totally missed the meaning of "change management". And why should he not?

Mr. Matthew Barrett, the CEO of the Bank of Montreal and probably not an NDPer, came out of his executive suite to ask the



Another View
by Carlo Testa

government to spend, ... to reflate the economy. This is the same fellow that, like his confreres, has been busily cutting credit lines to small businesses, keeping interest rates on credit cards at usury levels, refusing to extend the credit card facility to

small business.

But now he wants the government to spend. On a less exalted level, but even more significant, is the delivery of two bits of news from our CBC Knowlton Nash. In funeral tones (and Knowlton is good at them!) he told us that Petro Canada is closing down some gas stations and some refineries.

But then, in a tone of great hope, he also told us that in February our political masters will meet in Ottawa to discuss the economy. And, in this total misunderstanding of reality, is the real problem.

The closing down of gas stations and refineries should be a moment of great rejoicing, if we are really committed to a cleaner environment. But the closing down should come at the end of a managed process (are you listen-

ing Bob?) which minimizes hardship to workers and the public.

On the other hand, the news of a meeting in Ottawa of our beloved Premiers should be reason for jeering, catcalls, and massive flight of capital to the Bahamas, Panama and that shining example of a well managed economy: Zimbabwe.

The best we can expect is that, in order to save their skins, they will follow the advice of the Bank of Montreal's chairman and start a new round of inflation and higher taxes.

Within four months the business cycle will pick up. Followed by recovery of the real estate market (if you want to buy a house do it now) and higher interest rates.

How do I know? Because it has happened regularly, about every five years, since 1945.

People's Forum

Turner's column bashed by bank bigshot

Dear Editor:

I am writing to correct the multitude of errors and misrepresentations contained in Garth Turner's recent column on bank profits. Like a number of ill-informed people, Mr. Turner attacked Canadian banks for what he believes are excessive profits earned in 1991. However, a look behind the bank industry's bottom line reveals some interesting facts.

For example, revenue earned in Canada at most banks was down significantly in 1991 (19 per cent at Royal Bank) and was the most disappointing in a decade. In contrast, the provincial economy shrank by just 1.7 per

cent. As for record profits, Royal Bank's overall revenue worldwide was only two percent more than last year - and would have been much less if we hadn't taken \$100 million set aside for third world loan losses and applied it to 1991 revenue.

In fact, the only reason Canadian banks reported reasonable profits overall in 1991 was the contribution of their operations outside of Canada. At Royal Bank, for example, the revenue we earned in other countries amounted to 42 per cent of our overall profit. If our critics took the time to analyze this, they would realize that Canadian banks are a shining example of

how business in this country can compete worldwide and bring profits back to Canada for the benefit of Canadians. Would our critics prefer we try to earn less and let the business go to other countries?

Also, in criticizing the level of bank profits, most people never mention the size of Canadian banks relative to dollars earned. Nor do they use any commonly accepted financial measurements like return on assets to assess their appropriateness. Simply put, large companies earn more dollars than small companies. And Canadian banks are large, with millions of customers and billions of dollars in assets. But as any financial analyst will tell you, it's the return on those assets and equity that are the real measure of profitability. And if you use these to analyze bank profits, they are hardly astronomical, or even unreasonable.

As for claims that banks are making their money by gouging customers, a study done by an independent consumers association revealed that service fees for the most commonly used consumer services rose less than the rate of inflation in 1991.

In answer to the often asked question of credit card interest rates, it is a proven fact that credit cards produce much larger write-offs and delinquencies than personal loans. In addition, the rates of credit cards also reflect the fact that balances are smaller and are paid off more quickly than personal loans - in fact, 50 per cent are paid off in less than 30 days and effectively produce no interest for the bank.

Finally, banks do not change their lending criteria during a recession. Unfortunately, depressed economic conditions

make it tougher for some individuals and businesses to meet these criteria because their situation worsens and they become less creditworthy. In these situations, banks try to help clients through a temporary period of difficulty with sound financial advice.

In conclusion, while banks in Canada have and will continue to feel the effects of the recession, their employees have done a tremendous job of minimizing the impact with very prudent

management. Consequently, while many banks south of the border have gone down the drain with their depositors' funds, the Canadian financial system is one of the strongest and most stable in the world. And this means that the deposits of Canadians continue to be among the most secure and protected in the world.

Sincerely,
David Moorcroft
Manager, Public Relations
Ontario District, Royal Bank

Mercy killing raises questions

The Editor:

The Star reported (Nov. 7) that a Gallop Poll revealed 75 per cent of Canadians say that doctors should be allowed to end the life of an incurably ill patient through mercy killing if the patient has made a formal request in writing.

Just like that - without any further evidence to go by - no questions asked - just go by a written request that may, or may not be authentic.

In Washington State (U.S.A.) voters rejected a first ballot measure to legalize euthanasia for the terminally ill. Opponents of the bill contended that voters saw that the "death with dignity" initiative contained too few safe guards to protect the elderly, the poor and the disabled.

Before we get carried away by the 75 per cent figure in the Canadian poll by Gallop, let's pause to take a good look at the many implications involved in this very serious subject.

Section 224 of our Criminal Code of Canada states that "everyone"

who (A) counsels or procures a person to commit suicide or (B) aids or abets a person to commit suicide, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for 14 years.

Section 212 of the Canadian Criminal Code states "Culpable homicide is murder, where the person who causes death to a human being means to cause his death".

This raises another serious question as to whether a person, who as a member of Parliament initiates a bill to implement euthanasia could be culpable, including those who may vote in support of such legislation.

Today (Jan. 9) the Star reports that the euthanasia debate is just beginning.

I ask this question - What is there to debate? To me it seems that those who wrote those sections into the Criminal Code meant it to remain permanently as low - no changes.

Steve Emmerson
Acton

Thanks Garth

To The Editor:

We all should be grateful to Garth Turner for accommodating the production of this beautiful record of our National Anthem. Unlike the Titanic, when a full orchestra kept playing while the ship went down, we can no longer afford an orchestra.

Meanwhile, our Prime Minister is flying south for the ultimate in photo opportunity at Mount Rushmore, after all his friend George Bush can do no less for the man who delivered a country without a shot being fired.

John McDermit, Minister of privatization is busy with the liquidation sale, everything must go, no offer refused, American Express only. Who says this Government has no foresight; when they needed a credit card company to handle expenses up to a thousand dollars. The first one that came to their mind was American Express, Jim Robinson must be pleased.

Sorry folks, I could not resist

this little play of words, unfortunately the danger that we will lose this country becomes everyday more real, and unless Canadians start to take an interest in their country, they will wake up some morning in the future as Americans.

I joined the Counsel of Canadians and urge everybody who cares to become a member. Ask your local library for two books, "The Quick and the Dead" from Linda McQuaig and the "Betrayal of Canada" by Mel Hurtig. If you don't know already you will find out who Jim Robinson is and how Simon Riesman got frustrated.

Canadians are buying imported goods in stores owned by Americans, every hour four million dollars go abroad as profits, dividends and royalties, the cost of foreign ownership. Hoping to have given you some food for thought.

Yours truly,
Ben Hoogendam, Inglewood