

Horsemen say nay

Protest government plan to scrap annual horse racing 'subsidy'

Approximately 500 people involved with Ontario's horse racing industry – including Acton's Geoff Maltby – rallied at Queen's Park last Wednesday to protest economist Don Drummond's recommendations to cut the province's \$16-billion deficit by allowing slots to operate at locations other than race tracks.

Recognizing that slot wagering would take away from the amount of money bet on horse racing, the province, which made billions of dollars since 1999 as landlords of the slots-at-tracks at 17 tracks in Ontario, agreed to a revenue sharing plan that gave the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission 75 per cent of the wagers, 20 per cent

to the racing industry and the balance to the municipalities where the slots-at-tracks are located. That 20 per cent equalled \$345-million last year, money split between track owners and horsemen to supplement race purses.

People involved in the horse industry were upset several weeks ago when Finance Minister Dwight Duncan called the slots revenue a "subsidy", and that the government would review the \$345-million allotted to quarter, thoroughbred and harness racing in Ontario each year through OLG's slots-at-racetracks partnership.

Maltby said people in the industry were even more upset when the government said there would be an additional 90,000 hours of homecare available if the deal with the harness industry was scrapped.

"Duncan is trying to polarize people against horse racing, making it a choice between health

care or horse racing and that's not the case," Maltby said recently, adding the plan to end the revenue sharing agreement "terrifies" a lot of people in the industry, and makes no sense as the money is not a subsidy and they are not getting any tax dollars.

Maltby said with at least seven horse racing centres located within five kilometres of Acton, and approximately 2,000 full-time race horse employees within a 30-minute drive of Acton. "It would hurt Acton quite a bit if the government didn't share the slots revenue." Maltby, who owns a stable with 25 horses on Third Line North, said the money the tracks receive from the slots is invested in the community in the form of jobs, some 60,000 in Ontario.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott showed his support for the horse racing industry by attending last week's rally at Queen's Park and in an e-mail to Maltby said while the Government of Ontario needs to get its spending under control, it should not include measures which would "devastate" the horse racing industry" and "disproportionately" impact rural Ontario.

Arnott said the current funding arrangement is not a subsidy, but an agreement between the industry and the Government, which allowed slots to be placed at racetracks – an agreement the "government should honour."



RELIEF WORKSHOP: Members of St. Albans Anglican Church discussed third world issues at a Primate's World Relief and Development Fund workshop on Saturday at the church. Participants included, from left: Cindy Blades, Primate representative Doris Mitimkulu, the Reverend Brian Galligan, Paulette Switzer and Sharon DeForest. – Ted Tyler photo

Widening 401 would avoid east-west freeway in Halton Hills

Widening the 401 to 12 lanes from Trafalgar Road to Highway 25 would negate the need to build a freeway across agricultural and rural land in the south end of Halton Hills. In an update to Town Council last Tuesday, and to Halton's Planning and Public Works last Wednesday, Town staff and its consultant confirmed a the widening can be done with minimal impact, unlike the GTA West corridor east-west freeway plan.

Town staff said it "generally supports" the scope of additional work the Ministry of Transportation agreed to undertake in response to major concerns with the initial draft plan for the GTA West corridor,

including the much-maligned freeway – Option 4-3 – an east-west highway spanning Halton Hills between Five and 10 Sideroads, ending at Highway 401 and Tremaine Road in Milton.

Consultant John McGill said their analysis confirms that a 12-lane core and collector would have minimal direct impacts on adjacent land uses, and with a north-south highway along the Towns eastern boarder, would meet traffic demands detailed in the MTO's GTA West corridor study, if the initial 2031 timeframe was kept.

Mayor Rick Bonnette thanked McGill for providing the facts, not emotion-based data needed to make their case. "You've proven that the 401 can be widened with very little to next to no impact to both the Milton and Halton Hills

sides..." Bonnette said, adding that since the MTO was already looking at expanding the 401 to 10 lanes, going to a 12-lane core and collector system would not be that much more costly.

Bonnette said he and Halton Chair Gary Carr told the MTO "basically to shove it" concerning municipal payment for a new north-south highway aligned with the 407 between Steeles Avenue and Five Side Road, which Bonnette said only showed up on maps in the past six months.

Staff caution Council that based on a preliminary review of the MTO work plan for additional work, they have concerns the scope of the study is changing to look at traffic issues beyond the stated 2031 timeframe to provide support for the east-west freeway, formerly Alternative 4-3.

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It's that time of year again!

Citizen of the Year Nominations

The Acton Rotary Club is seeking nominations for
Acton's Citizen of the Year

Nominations with supporting explanation to be mailed to:

Citizen of the Year, c/o Acton Rotary Club

Box 22, Acton, L7J 2M2

or Email bobmackinnon@sympatico.ca

Deadline: March 31, 2012

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the unchanging God.**

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| Sun. March 4 | - 'The Good Shepherd' |
| | Speaker: Patrick Gushue |
| Sun. March 11 | - Communion 'The Servant King' |
| Sun. March 18 | - 'The Mind of the Master' |
| Sun. March 25 | - 'Lord of the Harvest' |