

Halton Hills

THIS WEEK

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Norval farmer Harry Brander was thrilled to be named Halton's top farmer.

Norval farmer takes top award

By Wendy Long

Norval resident Harry Brander, 43, is Halton's outstanding farmer of the year for 1992.

"I like working for the farm organizations to better them, certainly not to win an award," Brander said humbly in an interview after officially receiving the honor Friday night at Georgetown's Alcott Arena.

Brander owns and operates Brandalea Farms on Winston Churchill Blvd., a 500 head per year commercial beef feedlot as well as a small custom farming operation. In the provincial program, Brander's business consistently ranks among the top one-third of beef feedlot operations in Ontario.

Brander said it was "great" to win the award. "I was kind of shocked. We were more than surprised," Brander said with a smile.

Brander has been farming since his graduation from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1970. He and his wife Judy purchased Brandalea Farms in 1975. Some 200 acres are owned, with another 210 rented. They spent the early years working to bring the farm up to standard. Brander said it wasn't until the 1980's that he could carve out enough time to attend agricultural meetings and organizations.

And that he did, serving on boards and organizations a mile long for well over a decade.

"It's been very gratifying," Brander said. "I was attending farm meetings and trying to make a difference in agriculture. Maybe it's because I'm a shrewd operator that I've been able to withstand the recession... You gotta buy right, feed right and sell right. This has been the worst year in history for just getting the crops off. Some of the crops were a total write-off."

Brander said he gets angry when farming is viewed simplistically as a way of life.

"No. It's a business," Brander said emphatically. "A way of life is a spin-off. If I said it was a way of life I'd be in the bottom two-thirds of the business, not the top third. It's capital extensive. Land, machinery and livestock cost huge, huge sums of money."

"I set goals. I'm a firm believer, if you don't set a goal you have nothing to reach out for."

Brander is concerned about the future of agriculture and the plight of Canadian farmers. He said he certainly wouldn't entice his children (April, 13, and William, 9) to go into farming.

"If we lose our farms we're going to be at the mercy of imported food... we'll lose our sovereignty as a nation," Brander said gloomily. "Just think: no farmers, no food, no future."

Brander serves on the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, among a myriad of other organizations. He was appointed to represent the O.F.A. on the Ministry of Environment's strategy team for wet waste reduction.

As well, Brander was nominated to represent Ontario's agri-food education to get farming information into the schools. "Farmers are the backbone of this country, we need to get agriculture into the curriculum," Brander said.

"I feel rather humble accepting the award," Brander said. "It wouldn't be possible without the support of my family, especially my wife. There's been lots of times I've missed my daughter's figure skating competition or my son's rep baseball game."

"I went to be better informed and to change policy... but I got a lot more out of the farm organizations than I was ever able to contribute to them. For those reasons I feel humble to have the award bestowed on us."

MVA on hold

By Dianne Cornish

Market Value Assessment (MVA) won't be coming to Halton in 1993, but it could very well be implemented in 1994 unless a yet-to-be-formed citizen's committee can come up with an alternative property tax assessment system that will garner the support of two-thirds of Halton Regional Council members before being considered for adoption.

That was the consensus reached early Thursday morning at the conclusion of a marathon special meeting of regional council to discuss the controversial tax reform. Councillors listened to 56 delegations during the nine-and-a-half-hour meeting which ended at 3:20 a.m. Thursday.

About 400 Halton ratepayers, most of them from Oakville and Burlington, gathered in the auditorium of Halton Regional Centre, in Oakville, to lend their support to opponents of MVA. All but three of the speakers objected to MVA, most calling for the scrapping of the system entirely.

However, council reached a compromise solution based on a motion put forward by Oakville councillor Kevin Flynn.

It wasn't until last Friday that discussion of MVA became an

open issue when regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy put forward a notice of motion for reconsideration of council's Sept. 23 decision to implement region-wide MVA in 1993.

Flynn's proposal to delay implementation of the controversial tax reform convinced Pomeroy to re-open the discussion.

At the September meeting, nine Burlington and three Milton councillors voted for MVA implementation, while Oakville's seven members and Halton Hills' five representatives voted against the proposal. The tie was broken by Pomeroy, who voted in favor of 1993 implementation.

Pomeroy's motion to re-consider set the stage for a full and open discussion of MVA with input from the public. That input came full force on Wednesday night.

Because of the great number of delegations, speakers were asked to keep their presentations to five minutes rather than the usual 15. Despite the reduced speaking time, council listened to the delegations for six-and-a-half hours.

The majority spoke against MVA, but many of them favored Flynn's motion, primarily because it bought them some time to come

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Locals support tax reform delay

Georgetown builder David McNally and Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce president Bob Malcolmson asked Halton regional councillors Wednesday night to take a closer look at Market Value Assessment (MVA) and its implications on business, industry and residents in Halton Region.

They were the only Halton Hills residents to address regional council along with 54 other delegations that gathered at Oakville's Regional Council Centre to give their views on the controversial tax proposal.

McNally told regional councillors that he owns some vacant land in Georgetown—land that has the potential for development, "to bring jobs to town and increase the

tax base." Under MVA, the lowest tax increase on his vacant lands will be 53 per cent; the highest, 143 per cent. "That's unacceptable; it's morally wrong," McNally said, adding that vacant land doesn't need services like garbage collection and police protection, as commercially and residentially developed lands do.

"I was told that if I open up a hot dog stand on one of my properties, my taxes might not increase (as much)," he said. "That's just ridiculous."

McNally urged council to work together and reach a compromise on MVA. He asked that regional representatives take another look at the tax proposal and establish a citi-

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