

The North Halton Compass

Reach then a soaring quill,
that I may write
As with a Jacob's staff
to take a height

CLEVELAND

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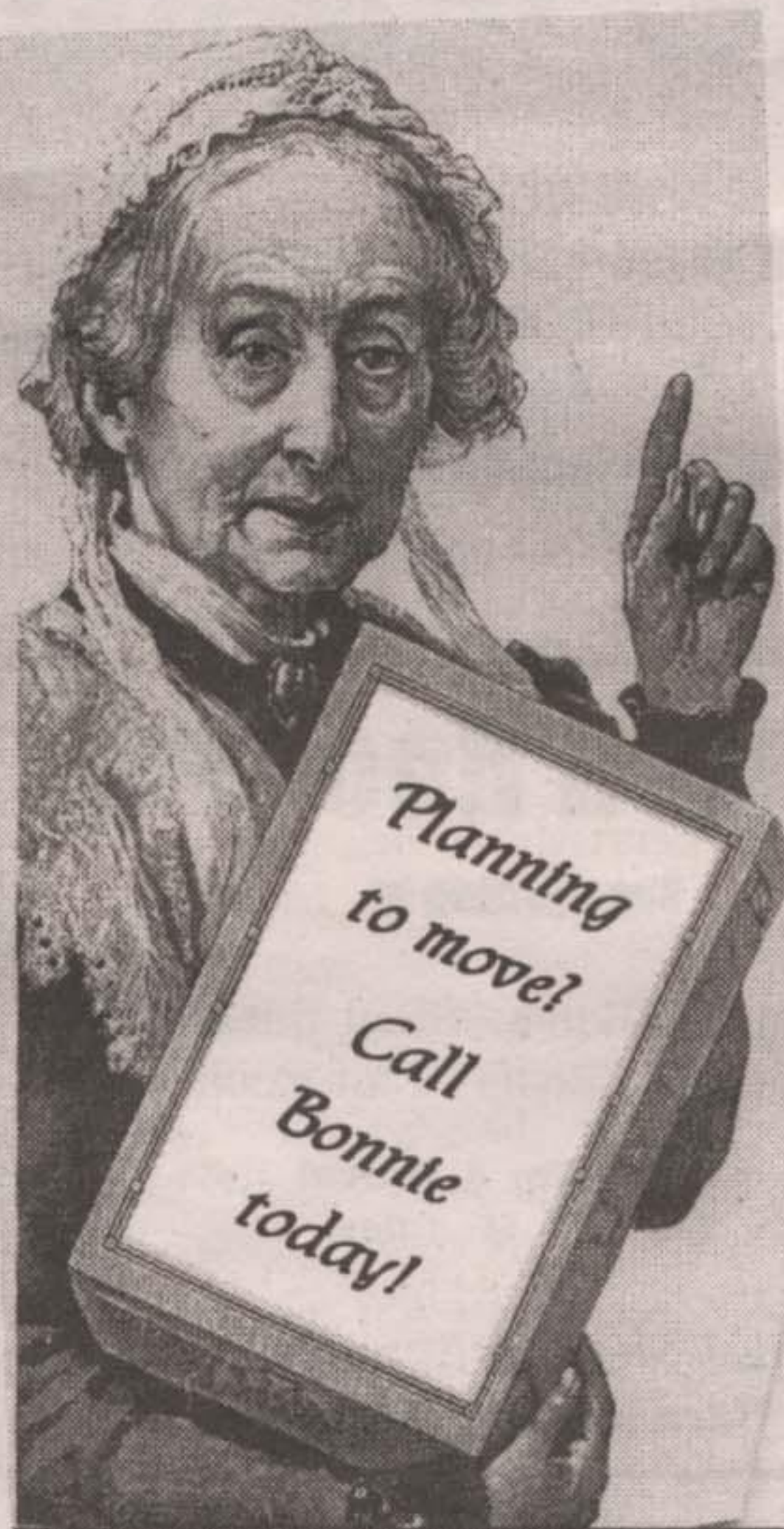
Brass Tacks

Editorial

Local residents that care about the future landscape in Halton were eager to hear the final results from the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Economic Impact Study, dated November 19, 1999.

The study should be regarded as a blueprint for the future growth of the area, one that takes a proactive stance for agriculture.

Developers and politicians must remember that Official Plans are not made to be broken, and land-use policies shouldn't be bent



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Hot future for farming

to facilitate urban expansion. As everyone knows, the GTA already lost thousands of acres of prime agricultural land in Peel, thanks to the shortsightedness of many.

The sad fact is that due to weak enforcement of agricultural policies,

150,000 acres of local farmland were lost between 1976 and 1996. A large percentage of land that is currently in production is slated for future urban growth, even though GTA farms have an higher productivity than farms in other parts of Ontario.

It would be a crying shame to lose a substantial amount of our beloved land, but we must take strength from the positive attitude of the study and forge our future in farming. Over one third of current production is traditional - dairy, cattle, pig and poultry; one third is specialty - horse, mushroom, greenhouse, nursery products, goat, sheep and lamb; and the remainder is fruit and vegetable (eight per cent) and field crops (13 per cent). So our traditional sectors are still key, but specialty lines are growing as a result of the close proximity of the urban market.

Walton & Hunter Planning Associates had eight specific recommendations in the GTA Agricultural Economic Impact Study, which included:

- ensuring the governing policies are consistent across the GTA to protect

contiguous areas of farmland,

- careful planning of roads and services so that there isn't resultant pressure to expand once the services are in place,

"The most effective official plan policies for protecting agricultural land are the ones that protect large contiguous areas. Policies that allow fragmentation of contiguous agricultural areas contribute to the decline in agricultural land use because of the pressure created by conflicts between uses."

Pg. ii, Geographic Profile, Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Economic Impact Study.

• watching that components of the "critical mass" of farms are not lost - which would thereby weaken others - and

- assisting farmers with marketing, responding to international trends, training and updating.

The conclusions of the study indicate (surprise!)

that agriculture is a resource worth protecting, making up a significant sector of the GTA economy. Approximately 1.3 billion in annual gross sales and over 34,700 jobs are the end result. But the best part?

"Agriculture enhances the quality of life for residents of the GTA through the products it markets and by preserving a rural countryside in proximity to urban settlements." (Executive summary, page vii)

Knowing that the land makes our city neighbours feel better is only a feather in the rural cap. As long as the stringent planning controls are in place to really protect the land base, we can all breathe a sign of relief.

Keep up the good work, folks! We're behind you all the way.

Deb Quaile



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