

# HAAC Farm Tour

## - get on the bus!

BY DONNA DANIELLI  
THE COMPASS

The Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC) welcomed regional and local elected representatives, advisory committee members and the media to its annual Halton Farm Tour on Thursday, September 21. HAAC is a group of volunteers involved in Halton's agricultural industry who provide advice to Regional Council on matters and issues related to the industry and its community. The annual Farm Tour is a forum for the local and regional government representatives and media to learn more about Halton's agricultural industry and some of the issues facing farmers.

First stop on the Tour was the Opsteen Chicken Farm where owner John Opsteen gave a brief but witty overview of what life as a chicken farmer. Opsteen, a second generation chicken farmer, raises meat birds and is currently making the transition from 1.7 kg size ("Kentucky Fried Chicken size chickens") to 2.1 kg size ("Swiss Chalet size chickens"). It takes six weeks for day-old chicks to become market ready. Between the three family farms - two in Milton and one in Flamborough - a total of 300,000 chickens are produced annually in six batches per year. Opsteen is in the process of rebuilding one of his barns that burned down in August 1999. When he approached the Town of Milton for his permit to rebuild, he was stunned to find that agricultural buildings in Milton weren't exempt from development charges and he was charged \$53,565.64. Agricultural buildings were treated as industrial buildings, with a development charge to finance maintenance of Town programs such as libraries, leisure centres, parks and swimming pools.

"You know, all those services chickens make a lot of use of," he laughed. Opsteen became an advocate for exemption of the charges for agricultural buildings and on September 18, Milton Town Council agreed and declared agricultural buildings exempt from development charges.

The next stop was White Rock Ostrich Farm where Don and Deborah Simmonds welcomed everyone with hot ostrich stew. The Simmonds purchased their farm in 1995, learning

about ostrich farming at a local Convention. Don Simmonds took the Tour for a hay wagon ride to visit the 14 breeding ostriches in their flock, three of which are the Redneck Ostrich the Simmonds started with in November 1996. The hens lay an egg every other day during breeding season ((April to October). About 80 per cent of the three to four-pound eggs hatch, but another 10 to 16 months pass before the chicks are market ready. The Simmonds process the birds through a federal abattoir and sell the protein rich, low fat meat at their farm store. The Simmonds recently welcomed 3,000 guests to their farm for OstrichFest during September.

The final stop was Valley Cove Farm, a farm that has been in Tom Parker's family since 1822. The Parkers arranged for a presentation by local Halton 4-H members to highlight activities and the importance of the program in a farming community. Tom Parker leads the Halton 4-H Field Crop Club. His daughter Rebecca is involved in the Beef and Judging Clubs, while son Adam is involved in the Beef and Field Crop Clubs.

Parker's wife Barb discussed the importance and advocacy of succession planning for family farms.

"Statistically, 120,000 Canadian farmers will reach the age of 65 in the next five years. Ninety-eight per cent of those are family farmers and only 15 per cent have a succession plan."

She also told the Tour about upcoming legislation that will require all large-scale livestock operations in Ontario to prepare a Nutrient Management Plan to ensure that manure is stored and disposed of properly to avoid contamination. Valley Cove Farm already has a Nutrient Management Plan and an Environmental Farm Plan in place, with a new manure storage barn near completion. Of concern for the Parkers though, is the implementation of this legislation. Although proposed standards will be provincial regulations, it will be up to the municipalities to enforce them.

"Are the municipalities going to be able to handle this?" Barb Parker asked. The legislation is expected in Ontario legislature later this fall.



Attendance: 8 members, 2 guests:  
Jim McQueen and Mel Iovio from the Town of Milton

Jim McQueen spoke in detail regarding the complicated procedure of forming a BIA in Campbellville and it was decided to put it on the back burner for the time being.

**Beautification Budget:** It was suggested that it should become a standard procedure to have the Town of Milton be responsible for the upkeep of flowerbeds, seasonal decorations and garbage pickup. In order for this to become possible it will be submitted in a proposal to Milton Council. Members were asked to

submit their concerns to Marilyn Goodale so they can be compiled and presented to Reid Kennedy of The North Halton Compass, on behalf of the Campbellville Business Association at the Milton Council meeting.

Mel Iovio has agreed to look into changing the location of the exit sign on Hwy. 401 to have the first sign west of Guelph Line to read "Campbellville Business District" instead of "Milton Business District." The Milton sign should therefore be moved east of the Guelph Line.

**Recap: Harvest Festival** - There will be live music on Sunday

and Monday, face painting, Snigs the clown and cloggers. Stan Price will once again supply the cornstalks and pumpkins. Scarecrow making is planned for October 1. Decorating the village is planned for October 2.

October meeting to be held on Wednesday, October 11, 2000 at 7 p.m. at the Mohawk Inn. We need to start discussions for the preparation for the Campbellville Country Christmas. Once again, we ask for your input and suggestions for the weekend festivities.

Prepared by Anni Baynton of Country Hearts, CABA Secretary.

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