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## SURVEYING THE REGION

# The North Halton Compass

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Volume 5, Issue 11

February, 2003

## Farmers accuse Region of barking up the wrong tree

BY DONNA DANIELLI

Trees are good. They contribute to health, recreation and quality of life, and yet they are a source of controversy in Halton Region. Many worried residents of Halton attended two separate workshops held by the Region on January 22nd and 25th to voice their opinions and concerns about proposed changes to woodland regulations.

As part of its Official Plan Review, the Region is suggesting a target goal of 30% woodland coverage by 2021, a 0.5% increase a year. A second goal is to comply with the requirements of a provincial policy statement that allows for development in significant woodlands and adjacent areas as long as there is no negative impact on either the natural features or ecological functions of the area. Such woodlands fall under a Greenlands B distinction. Along with a 50-metre buffer of adjacent lands, these woodlands must have an environmental impact assessment done before any development of these lands can take place.

The workshops evoked strong opinions about the proposed changes.

"Currently Halton has 9.1% of its woodlands in the urban area and

30.9% coverage in the rural area for an average of about 23% overall coverage," stated Halton Hills farmer Stephen Baker. "You will need another 6,411 hectares of woodland to meet this objective of 30% overall coverage, or another 20% of farmland converted to woodland. That means one in every five farms needs to be ploughed in and replanted to meet this target, or every farmer has to give up 20% of his income. This is nonsensical."

Nick Digirolamo also expressed his concerns about where the additional percentage of woodland coverage would come from. "It's still a lot of smoke and mirrors. There's no compensation or talk of compensation for our land. It's really expropriation," he complained. "Instead, why don't you expropriate the last 20 feet of all the property in Oakville to put in nature trails, and see what kind of resistance you get?"

Campbellville's Byron Essery, while not a farmer, expressed concerns about what would or would not be allowed on his land in the future. "With all of these policy changes, will this increase or decrease property values, or will you end up as just a caretaker on your own land unable to do

anything on it?" he asked. "Who will buy land in the rural area if all they can do is look at the trees and listen to the birds?"

Phil Armstrong of Oakville said, "It seems to me that the farmer's interest is in protecting the land so that they can one day sell it to a developer." When Mr. Digirolamo protested that there has never been a tree cut on his farm in over 45 years, Mr. Armstrong responded, "What's worrisome is that a developer will."

At issue for the farmers is what they will be able to do with their land if they want to sell it. When there's a woodland within 50 metres of a property, an environmental impact assessment will be required. This costs thousands of dollars. "This is our pension," explained Halton Hills farmer, Jim Stark. Mr. Digirolamo added, "Some farms have been in action for three or four generations, and have paid taxes on that land for three to four generations. Now the farmer is going to get no compensation for it whatsoever."

Regional staff was quick to point out that the 30% figure was simply a proposal and could be subject to

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Photo by DONNA DANIELLI

## Celebrity Dinner

The Milton Chamber of Commerce's first annual Sports Celebrity Dinner, held January 21st, attracted over 160 sports fans. Pictured above are, from left to right: Brookville veterinarian Stephen Ball, Dale Hawerchuk, Chamber president Melissa DeBrouwer, Geraldine Heaney, Marcel Dionne and Bobby Hull. Also on hand were Toronto Argonauts runningback Michael (Pinball) Clemons and harness racer Ron Waples. Entertainment included Bob Cowan of CH Morning Live, an autograph session, dinner, an auction and a keynote address by Bobby Hull. All proceeds from the dinner were donated to the Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Program that provides scholarships to each of Milton's secondary schools and to Junior Achievement members.

### Inside this Month's Compass

#### SHOEBOX MEMORIES

In 1824 Robert Murray of Moffatt, Dumfries, Scotland bought the east half of Lot 6, Conc. 4, Esquesing, and after his first wife died, he married Margaret Duff, whose family was from Perthshire, Scotland.

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#### IDLE PURSUITS

Ebenezer United Church is becoming known as a place of artistic excellence, and on Saturday, February 8 at 7:30 pm it is presenting an evening of sensitive and creative music with the Paragon Harp Duo.

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#### KITH AND KIN

Lottie (MacLeod) Schneider tours the grounds of the 2002 Milton Steam Era with Carl Kennedy's Ford tractor last Labour Day Weekend. Born on January 27th, 1903, Lottie still drives her own car.

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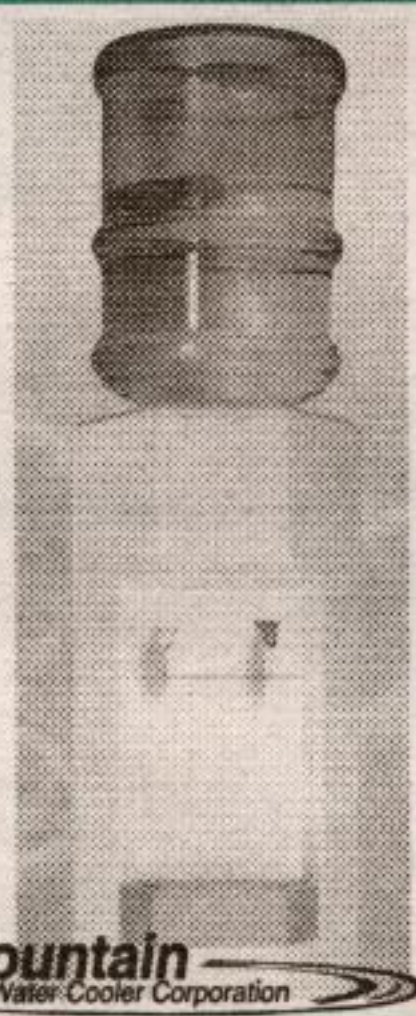


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