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REGIONAL NEWS, NOTES AND NEIGHBOURS

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Local residents oppose tree cutting by farmer

Halton Hills farmer fights urbanization

By JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Halton farmer Rick Stull would like to continue farming his land. But the Glen Williams resident is frustrated and angered by what he perceives as a growing urban society in his midst, one in which his role as a farmer is denigrated or worse, simply ignored.

People, he says with emphasis, don't understand his way of life or they choose not to – and that's an impression that's become disconcertingly clear to him as Halton continues to develop. "Urban people are not concerned about us."

Last month, he decided to clear dead elms and hawthorns from a portion of his 8th Line property close to an estate lot development that abuts his property. Mr. Stull says he had good reasons for cutting the trees down, among them rising insurance costs as the trees are close to a residential development on McMaster St. Aware of the liability issues raised by his insurance company, he took steps to remove the trees in case a property owner from nearby homes was injured.

He wasn't prepared for the swift reaction of residents along McMaster St. Ward 2 Councillor Joan Robson said she was "flooded with calls" about the tree clearing and both she and fellow Ward 2 Councillor Bryan Lewis visited residents along McMaster St. who complained about the tree cutting, about the lack of any prior notice from Mr. Stull, and about the potential affect on wildlife. Some residents told Ms. Robson they would have been prepared to lease part of Mr. Stull's land to keep the trees. One resident did mention a tree falling down on his property. "One fellow told me that there was one dead tree that had fallen against a fence. He said there was no danger. He just snapped off the branch and it was no problem."

Nancy Mott-Allen, Halton Region's manager of current planning, says the region is investigating whether or not Mr. Stull contravened Halton's tree bylaw. But Mr. Stull says that he followed the requirements of the bylaw. As a commercial farmer, he says he has the right to cut down trees on his property and he selected trees that were not prohibited from cutting under the bylaw.

Mr. Stull was incensed by the quick reaction of the Town when councillors responded to complaints from residents along McMaster St.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Prize winning show jumper, Vanessa Sabucco and her horse, Redford in competition. See story page 10.

Report on Sharia Law receives mixed reaction

By DONNA DANIELI

On June 25, 2004, former Attorney General Marion Boyd was asked by Premier Dalton McGuinty to review the province's Arbitration Act. The review was requested after widespread public outcry and negative media attention surrounding an announcement by Mumtaz Ali, founder of the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice, to recruit a panel of arbitrators and establish a Sharia Law court in Ontario.

Sharia Law is based on the Qur'an and details the manner in which Muslims should live their lives. It is intended to afford Muslims the opportunity to resolve family conflicts in a way that supports their faith. The Arbitration Act, in place in Ontario for over a decade and used by Jewish and Catholic residents, gives religious and cultural groups the clout to resolve civil disputes and some family law matters.

Mixed reactions greeted Marion Boyd's report, entitled "Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion", which was presented to the Premier last month. While some hailed the report for upholding religious freedoms, others termed it a further condemnation of some of the province's most vulnerable citizens.

Sharia Law has made headlines around the world many times in the past few years. It was used by the Taliban to deny women the right to education and employment, and it was not so long ago that schoolgirls




in Saudi Arabia burned to death, forbidden to escape their blazing school by guards because they were not wearing headscarves.

Sharia Law supporters argue that the atrocities reported in the name of the religious court, have come from countries such as Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, countries they argue are doomed to fail at Sharia Law because they don't have a social justice system in place as well. Marion Boyd has admitted that the examples of victimization through Sharia law she heard, came from women who had experienced them in other countries, not in Canada. "The state does not have agents going through society looking for wrongs to set right, except in the case of crimes and health and safety inspections, and arguably, in

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SHARIA LAW... WAS USED BY THE TALIBAN TO DENY WOMEN THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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