

EDITORIAL

The Province seems hell-bent on chipping away at the rural way of life. We've had the "Greenbelt" and "Places to Grow" and now we've got the "Ontario Trails Strategy" to worry about. Again, on the surface it seems to be a benign proposal, a chance to set up hiking trails for our children and their offspring.

This kind of legislation exists in other parts of the world, most notably the UK, and if there is one thing we Brits can do well, it is to enshrine the rights of the people in cast-iron laws. Sometimes this gives rise to inequities.

Take the sad tale of pop star Madonna, who a couple of years ago purchased a stately home in England complete with huge tracts of woods and meadows. A lovely spot apparently. So lovely that the great British public took to hiking and picnicking in it. Madonna not unnaturally took umbrage and put up gates and no trespassing signs. The great British public felt that this was way too unfriendly and took her to court to make her take the gates down. Once in the courts, Madonna got a shock. The judge ruled that the public had a right to use her land and in a Solomon like decision divided the land. Half of the land Madonna could keep, the other half became public property.

If you think that can't happen here follow the "Ontario Trails Strategy" as it unfolds and keep asking yourself why the ministry spokesperson could not bring himself to answer the question as to whether the strategy would be voluntary or mandatory. I know I'm being suspicious but I have a pretty good idea which option he wanted to pick.

DON'T FORGET...

the deadline for your tax returns
is April 30th

Are you ready for the income tax deadline of
April 30, 2005? We can help!
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TRACEY McGRATH
Certified Financial Planner

Dear Tracey

TRACEY McGRATH is a Senior Financial Consultant for Investors Group and Halton area resident for over 30 years.

Each week she will answer your questions about Tax, Estate, and Financial Planning.

PREPARE to PROSPER

Dear Tracey, I've been tossing around the idea of starting a small business - can you tell me where/how to start??

Signed, *Wanna be my own boss*

Dear *Wanna be*: Congratulations on completing your taxes early - that indicates to me that you are a timely, conscience person... great traits for an entrepreneur.

Becoming your own boss can be a rewarding career, offering freedom and independence, but small business ownership takes a lot of hard work and determination. To be successful most experts urge prospective business owners to carefully and completely analyze their potential venture.

I'll assume you have done your research and have started a Business Plan. Financing the 'start up' is usually a main concern. Your business plan will include a Cash Flow Forecast which details what funding you need for your initial costs (i.e. land, building, fixture, machinery, supplies, opening inventory), and the daily operating costs (i.e. inventory, rent, taxes, advertising, payroll).

The initial costs include fixed assets such as land and building and are typically financed by a bank with long term financing. Other initial costs can be leased. The interest rates are higher but the payments are deduction from income tax. Leasing arrangements are used for machinery, vehicles and office equipment, where it is desirable to avoid heavy capital cost outlays.

It is easier to borrow money for fixed assets, so don't put all your equity into machinery or buildings; instead save it for working capital needs.

For information on programs, services and regulations contact:
Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre
1-800-567-2345 or on their web site
www.cbosc.org/ontario

mail questions to:
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the editor

Momentum from the March 2 rally at Queen's Park continues to build - everybody is playing a role getting the message to politicians and bureaucrats, and we're seeing more and more signs of impending action.

OFA's website offers an opportunity to sign up and become involved in the campaign to get solutions to Ontario farmers' financial crisis. In the three weeks since the rally at Queen's Park, more than 600 people have taken that route to alert governments of the need for immediate action.

While they have been doing that, thousands of farmers across the province continue to make contact with MPPs, delivering the message of what Ontario agriculture needs to survive this crisis. Along with their efforts, agri-businesses across the province have joined our farmers in delivering our message to government.

There continues to be a lot of activity at the political level. Immediately after the rally, leaders of the commodity organizations and Ontario's three general farm organizations met with Rural Caucus members to stress agriculture's key concerns.

Working through the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, we have talked with farm leaders across Canada, making sure there is agreement nation wide with grains and oilseeds producers and other farm organizations to demand revisions to the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program. Getting rid of the deposit and ensuring the program is responsive when a need for cash is identified are key changes being sought right across Canada.

Continuing efforts through CFA, meetings have taken place with Hon. Ralph Goodale, Canada's minister of finance, and Hon. Andy Mitchell, our federal minister of agriculture, to discuss details of agriculture's economic recovery plan. As OFA's president, I have met with Minister Goodale and Minister Mitchell's staff to present details of Ontario farmers' immediate needs.

Leaders of Ontario's campaign recently met at OMAF to review time lines for resolving the outstanding issues facing Ontario farmers. We have also considered the successes achieved since starting the campaign - removal of the fees for water-taking permits for agricultural uses, return of funding for Municipal Drainage Outlet projects, and funding for improvements to the dead stock removal program.

Dear Sir,

I write an open letter to the people of Halton Hills, particularly Georgetown, from Heritage Halton Hills. We have been asked by Town Staff to comment on the need for a new roof for the original Georgetown Armouries. Is this building, now the property of the Town of Halton Hills worthy of taxpayers money?

The Georgetown Armouries originally date from 1867 when Armouries were built across the nation in response to the Fenian Raids. Georgetown's Armoury has been expanded several times as the size of our Militia, the Lorne Scots grew. With the completion of a new Armoury on Todd Road, the Town purchased the property in 1997 and has been maintaining the property ever since, hoping to find a tenant for the historical building.

Besides serving as a drill shed, the Armoury served as a dance hall and display venue for the Georgetown Fall Fair. It was guarded closely during the two World Wars. Now the old guardian of Georgetown sits in the Fairgrounds Park on a cement pad and awaits her fate. Should the Town of Halton Hills demolish or restore the building? Please send your ideas or opinions to Heritage Halton Hills, Clerk's Office, 1 Halton Hills Drive, Georgetown ON L7G 5G2 or e-mail the Chair at mrowe6@cogeco.ca.

Sincerely,
John Mark Rowe,
Chairman, Heritage Halton Hills

OFA has sent letters to all federal cabinet ministers from Ontario seeking their support for agriculture's key lobby points. These letters have been followed up with telephone calls to all the ministers.

We have joined lobby efforts at Queen's Park that have been organized by Federation leaders from Perth and Huron counties, targeting urban MPPs, seeking their understanding and support for agriculture's needs. OFA will also join Ontario grains and oilseeds organizations for a Queen's Park lobby day, working to improve understanding of the sector and its immediate financial requirements.

We know that if we want the support and understanding of politicians, we must also work to help consumers understand what's at stake. With this in mind, OFA is preparing for meetings with the editorial boards of both the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail.

Like all of our other lobby activities, we know it will take more than a single meeting to achieve results. We are seeing owners of farmland experiencing the effects of crashing commodity prices as groups of producers are demanding that any rent for crop lands be tied to profitability. This is sure to bring more voices to the table demanding solutions to Ontario's growing economic crisis.

Ron Bonnett, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

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