

Christmas sales good for local merchants

Despite a slow start to the pre-Christmas shopping season in Acton, several local merchants report better than expected sales.

The unseasonably warm weather through November meant fewer people were shopping for warm coats at the olde Hide House, but President Steve Dawkins said things improved at Acton's

largest retailer as soon as the snow started to fall.

"We had a healthy increase in the sales of small leather goods and gift items which we attribute in part to a much appreciated level of patronage from local residents," Dawkins said in an interview on Monday.

Dawkins said that the weather and an aggressive

marketing campaign resulted in coat sales that were "quite strong" in the last half of December and that relative to last year, furniture sales were also good.

Dawkins said they were also pleased with the sales at the Olde Book House.

"We're extremely pleased with the level of support from the local population and sur-

rounding area. We have nothing to compare this year's sales to because we weren't open last Christmas, but we met our expectations."

Judy MacDonald, owner of Country Reflections, was also happy with the sales at her Mill Street East gift shop.

"I did better than last year and last year was good for me as I was just getting my feet

in and building a good customer base. I had expectations that the pre-Christmas season would be good, and it was better than that," MacDonald said.


Unlike some local merchants who are upset that more Acton people don't shop locally, MacDonald said she has a different opinion.

"I don't think there should

be any expectation that people should shop anywhere except where is best for them and offers the best price and the most convenience. We are all busy people and we have to do what's best for us," MacDonald said.

"We have to be offered something that makes us want to shop here or there, no matter where it is."

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What's Inside



A former drag strip between the Fifth and Sixth Lines of Halton Hills, north of Hwy. #7 is now an exclusive estate development. See page 2.



Brad and Anita Macfarlane are overwhelmed with the community support they've been getting since Brad was seriously hurt in a farm accident. See page 8.



Regional government success or failure? The New Tanner explores the birth of Halton Region in the first of a series on page 4.

CN rents rail line through here

Four Acton stores close

Faced with the recent closures of four downtown core business, the general manager of the Acton BIA (Business Improvement Area) said the challenge facing Acton is to persuade local residents to at least check out what's in local stores before leaving town to shop.

"We need to persuade our community to shop local first to see what we have and obviously they can't get everything they need in town, but should at least give it a try and then go out of town, instead of the other way around," Janis Fread said.

Since Christmas Sweet Dreams Café, On the Window Ledge and The House of Leather, and a dry cleaner, all on Mill Street East have closed.

"I was really surprised and disappointed to learn that On the Window Ledge had closed because the owner was so enthusiastic about being in Acton and was plan-

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THE FACE OF WINTER: Although he could barely see with his snow suit, scarf, mitts and hat, 3 year old Tyler Kirkpatrick took advantage of last weekend's snow fall to have lots of outdoor fun on Saturday. - Angela Tyler photo

Texas company runs line after 140 years

BY MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner

After 140 plus years Acton is no longer on the Canadian National Railway (CN) line. Residents probably won't notice the change, but officially the town is now on the Goderich - Exeter Railway operated by RailTex of San Antonio, Texas.

Acton rail buff Owen Masales says the shift has been watched by a number of rail fans in the area including himself.

CN spokesman Ian Thomson said the lease shifting the line's operation but not its ownership, closed Nov. 15. It is now a feeder line for CN.

Calls to Goderich - Exeter (GEXR) manager Jan Polley in Kitchener were not returned.

A CN press release says GEXR already operated the line from Goderich to Stratford and from Clinton Junction to Centralia. The new lease increases their territory by adding the Guelph and Fergus subdivisions from Silver, just west of Georgetown, to London.

In the release Francois Hebert, assistant CN vice-president, business planning and network restructuring, said the shift is "an ideal way for CN to preserve and improve rail service for shippers in the Kitchener area."

Masales puts it a little less euphemistically. "We all know the big rail-

ways have been trying to dump their short lines for years. Those are the ones they say are costing them money. They just want to be in the long haul business. This lets them dump this line without upsetting their auto frames manufacturer in Kitchener."

It also lets GEXR make more money with its existing salt hauls out of the mines at Goderich, Masales speculates. GEXR used to bring its tank cars of salt down to Stratford, then transfer them to CN to be hauled into the main yard at Maple. Now those cars can make the whole trip under one engine instead of requiring any transfer. It's a longer haul for GEXR and less hassle for CN.

VIA continues to run its passenger trains over the London line and GEXR has a window over CN's lines into Maple to get cars to that yard and back out to Silver without interrupting CN's service.

For the average resident the shift in operation won't be obvious. VIA trains haven't changed and GEXR uses rolling stock for freight from all over just like CN did, Masales says. Only the engines are identifiable and they pass during the night when only really dedicated train watchers will be apt to pay any attention.

Masales says the only real fence buff noticed to date is the fact GEXR uses smaller

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Town vows better taxi service

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

The Town has threatened to intervene if the three taxi companies in Halton Hills don't start provide better service to Acton.

"If it's necessary we'll have to bring the companies together to work out a system where we can assure that there's some kind of rea-

sonable service in the Acton area." Town bylaw enforcement and licensing officer Ron Stein said in an interview on Tuesday.

Although the current bylaw allows the three companies operating in Halton Hills to refuse fares, except those flagged from the street, Stein said Council could always change the bylaw. Two of the three taxi companies in Halton Hills list an Acton phone

number in their Yellow Pages advertisement, but none currently have a car dedicated to Acton service calls.

At last week's general committee meeting both the Mayor and Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette reported complaints they'd received - mostly from seniors - about the poor taxi service in Acton.

Bonnette said he had a "real concern" that Acton

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