

EDITORIAL

Protecting our precious farm land

By the Honourable Lyle Vanclief and Bob Bedggood

Earlier this year, the Premier of Ontario announced his government would develop a strategy to manage growth in this province. This strategy includes a series of land-use and planning initiatives, some of which will have an impact on farming and the agri-food industry.

Ontario has some of the richest agricultural land in the country. It certainly has the most diverse agriculture industry. And there is no doubt that Ontario's agri-food industry enriches both the economy and the quality of life in this province. It is in everyone's best interest to protect these lands for agricultural uses, today and in the future. Equally, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure the continued strength of the agri-food sector.

To do that, the government must understand the concerns and seek the advice of the agricultural community. That's why the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Steve Peters, appointed us as the Agricultural Advisory Team.

We have been charged with the task of exploring issues of concern with the farmers of this province, seeking out technical experts, and studying other jurisdictions to ultimately provide advice and recommendations to the government as it develops and implements its growth management strategy.

We will be studying five specific policy areas, including:

- Land-use planning policies that affect farm viability, including specific issues relating to the Farming and Food Production Protection Act, the minimum distance separation formulae, and conflict resolution practices.

- Criteria to help identify viable blocks of prime agricultural land.

- The range of land uses suitable for specialty crop areas.

- The role that non-government land trusts and other organizations could play, including identifying supportive and educational tools to protect agricultural land.

- Regional marketing/educational strategies to improve public/market awareness and strengthen local opportunities for agricultural activities in protected areas.

Following several preliminary meetings and briefing sessions, our work began in earnest the week of July 19, in meetings with general farm organizations and other provincial organizations to gather their input.

From now until the middle of August, we will be holding seven regional consultations across the province. At these meetings, we'll seek input from the farm community, agriculture and food industry representatives, rural community and business leaders, municipal representatives, academics, and other interested and involved stakeholders.

In addition, we are accepting written submissions from either individuals or groups wishing to share their views on the five policy areas listed above. Submissions can be sent to the Agricultural Advisory Team, 1 Stone Road West, 3rd Floor, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 4Y2.

Minister Peters has asked us to provide our recommendations to the government by October 2004. This will inform the government's decisions on the growth management strategy, the greenbelt plan, and other land-use and planning initiatives, while helping to ensure the protection of our prime farm land and the continued strength of Ontario's agri-food industry.

* The Honourable Lyle Vanclief is a former minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Bob Bedggood is a past President of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.



TASTE OF ITALY: Councillor Mike O'Leary gets some help from Melissa Cortese, daughter of the owners of Acton's newest restaurant *A Taste of Italy*, cutting the ribbon last Friday. Mayor Rick Bonnette, centre, presents Lori Cortese with a congratulatory certificate while family friends and staff look on. *Danielle McIsaac photo.*

Men, women different ... really?

Recently an agency at the Vatican released a statement which claimed that men and women were different. It was an astonishing statement which aroused the wrath of those who noting it came from the Vatican immediately were opposed to it.

This has never been a problem for me. Ever since Tarzan, nee Lord Greystoke, announced in stentorian tones: "Me Tarzan - you Jane", I've assumed Tarzan was right. However, there's certainly been a change in the style of family living.

Used to be there was a clear line of demarcation between the husband's chores and the wife's. Now the jobs sometimes overlap and we have friction between those who think they are doing more than they should, and those who think the other half should be doing more.

You can blame it all on labour saving gadgets and appliances. Many of the old chores such as taking out the ashes, chopping kindling, cleaning stove pipes, emptying the wash water, hanging out clothes, running to the store, planting gardens, canning fruit or pushing a hand mower, to name a few, have been eliminated.

So working on the assumption that his home is his castle, the man of the house figured every castle needed a lord to look after it. Since there were no other contenders, except the woman, he claimed the post. Naturally the position carried some responsibilities and the man did not hesitate to rattle off the orders which the rest of the clan accepted, albeit grudgingly.

The women looked after domestic affairs, the kids, the shopping, had

Coles' Slaw

with
Hartley Coles



the babies, saw that everyone had a bath on Saturday night and changed diapers without flinching.

The lord looked after all the heavy chores which included the garden, the storm windows, repairs around the old homestead and applying the stern discipline which could come in the form of a solid rebuke or a trip to the woodshed.

In addition to these arduous duties, the lord also contrived to keep a crock of home brew bubbling in his basement. His pay cheque was the only source of revenue for the whole gang. It never seemed to spread far enough.

The kids, who varied in number from one to 10, depending on the number the Lord sent, were expected to do all the dirty work, like running errands, wiping dishes, cutting lawns, picking berries, digging potatoes and keeping peace with the neighbours and the other members of the brood.

Then times changed. The lady got a job. She started to bring a few bucks home every week. She felt that since she was contributing to the paying end of the deal that she should also get an opportunity to say a few words about the sloppy way the lord was running the house.

At first he looked down from

Mount Olympus with an amused grin at this show of independence. Then he got worried. But it was too late.

Already the sweet girl he married was talking about marriage being a partnership - that both husband and wife should share in the decision making. By the time he started growing a moustache back and letting sideburns grow, control of the house had been wrested from him with hardly a struggle.

The kids, amazed that the lord had surrendered with hardly a stiff upper lip, decided they should also share in the rebellion. They got part time jobs, refused to get up in the morning, let their hair grow, and got tattooed. The lord had become an anachronism, a relic of a past age.

Now the lady washes the family vehicle, a job considered unladylike a decade back. The lord washes the dishes, looks after the young kids who come less and less frequently. Sometimes he even does the washing in a shiny automatic which replaced the tub and washboard.

It is indeed a low point for the lord. He moans about his fate and curses his softness.

He goes home now and instead of slippers being laid out there is a list of chores. He is rapidly reaching the end of his tether.

He is the butt of comedy, the underbelly of the snake and the jester to kick. He's early to the grave, late to the dinner table and last in front of the TV.

He always knew he was different but now it has been confirmed. Will he attempt to turn back time? Wait 10 years and you'll see.



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