

McGuinty's greenbelt legislation frustrating landowner

To the Editor,

Re: Why Greenbelting Farmland Cuts Farmers Planned Retirement Packages by at Least 50%

The Preservation of Prime Farmland for farming purposes is exactly what Bert and Laurie Andrews have been doing for the past 25 years. If farming on our land can be maintained as viable this is exactly what will continue whether it is us or someone else who is farming our land. We are very disappointed with the Town of Halton Hills and subsequently the Region of Halton. Pushing an additional 4,000 acres into the greenbelt at the 11th hour without consultation with farmers or rural landowners, who are negatively impacted, is dictatorial and undemocratic.

Other farmers who were affected by the first draft, as well as ourselves now, have not been informed of the criteria used in this whole process and this too is unjust.

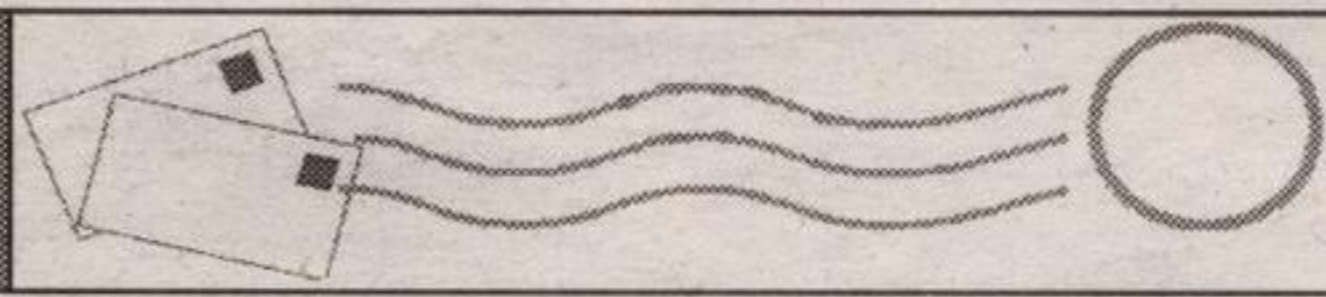
We operated Andrews' Scenic Acres and Scotch

Block Winery. We did not inherit our farm but purchased it at the market value in 1980 from a speculator. It was a derelict property and over 25 years we have built this business from scratch enduring crop failures, weather, high interest rates, taxation issues, escalating costs and other calamities too numerous to mention. How did we do it? We have worked seven days a week, 14 to 18 hours on many days. This was all without the benefit of weekends off, summer holidays and other normal summer recreation.

Most people take this all for granted but our few treasured breaks over the last 25 years have been few and far between. How did we support our family through all of this? Bert operated an off farm business until 1993 and Laurie worked off the farm until 2000. Few people can know what it is like to work two full time jobs as we did for so many years. This was how we made ends meet.

We did not take a salary until five years ago be-

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cause the business could not afford to pay us. Now we receive a very modest income, paltry by most people's standards.

Because Bert is 61 and I am 58 we are looking at retirement. How can we do this? Can we sell this operation as an operating farm? Economic viability is a major issue. All farms in Halton Hills carry three economic components. The first is the value as an operating farm business. The other two components are the value as farmland. One of these two components is the value as a producing farm. The third component is the value associated with the official plan of the Town of Halton Hills.

Greenbelting our farm is actually expropriation without the paperwork. It legislates without compensation, the official plan component of our farm value.

We are really troubled

that our governments, local, regional and provincial feel they have the right to dictate how we end our lives. Expropriating or legislating our land only offers us the option of working at this difficult intensity until we drop dead or live in difficult financial circumstances. Our farm is our retirement package. It is all that we have. It seems ludicrous that such dictation can take place in a democracy.

Why are farmers and rural landowners the fall guys in this grand scheme? Please consider two comparative examples. What would happen if the provincial government announced they would be legislating a reduction of 50% in the teacher's pension payout? What would happen if the federal government tried to legislate a 50% reduction in the payout of the Canada Pension Plan?

The politicians and

planners who are doing this have no farm financial concerns and look forward to comfortable retirement packages. I am sure it is difficult for these people to look at the situation from our perspective but some consideration has to be given to the financial issues we face.

Greenbelting is a positive and noble idea. Promotional literature from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing states the benefits of greenbelting are stronger communities, healthier Ontarians and a better quality of life. Everyone supports these concepts as they do motherhood and raspberry pie.

Why does the cost have to be born on the shoulders of farmers and rural landowners? John Gerretsen is reported to have said at the Burlington Greenbelt meeting that greenbelting does not infringe on property

rights. Does this mean that property rights are not entrenched in either provincial jurisdiction or the federal constitution?

Those who wish to have expansive greenbelt areas to enjoy need to put their money towards their environmental desires. A lesson could be learned from our U.S. neighbours. All states including our neighbour, New York State, have greenbelt or trust plans with proper compensation to the designated farmland owners. This makes the plan viable and fair.

This is a very emotional and stressful issue for farm families. There are many farm families facing this difficult situation. The greenbelt issue is bringing farm and rural landowners together as we have not seen in 25 years. We can only hope that fairness and a concern for our plight and for those like us can be integrated into this grand scheme.

Sincerely,
Bert and Lauraine
Andrews

The Regional Municipality of Halton

A Partnership That Works!



Holiday Waste Collection

No Change to Your Collection Day over the Christmas and New Year's Holidays

Halton Waste Management Site will be Closed on Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25, 2004 and New Year's Day, Saturday, January 1, 2005

Please Note:

Garbage and Blue Box Collection will be picked up on your regular collection day. Collection times may vary due to the holidays and poor weather conditions, therefore, please place your waste at the curb by 7:00 a.m. on your scheduled collection day.

Please refer to your 2004 Curb Appeal Waste Management Calendar for further details or visit our website at www.region.halton.on.ca

Winter Tips for Setting Out Your Waste

- Place ALL items at the curb by 7:00 a.m. on your collection day, but not before 5:00 p.m. the evening before.
- In one Blue Box, place loose glass bottles and jars, metal food and beverage containers, aluminum foil, Styrofoam, plastic bottles and polycoat.
- In a second Blue Box flatten and place corrugated cardboard, fine paper, boxboard and newspapers.
- Tie cardboard in bundles no larger than 30"x30"x8".
- To save space, crush pop cans, large plastic bottles and beverage cartons, and fill boxboard boxes with other boxboard items.
- On windy days, place your Blue Boxes out for collection on the morning of collection day by 7:00 a.m. instead of the night before.
- Stack your Blue Boxes on top of one another and place heavier items on top to prevent papers from blowing away.
- Place garbage bags/containers on one side of the driveway and Blue Boxes on the other side of the driveway.
- Keep waste items clear of snow and visible to collect. Do not place items on top of snow banks.

