



SENIOR QUERIES: There were a lot of questions about pensions from Acton seniors last Thursday when Wellington-Halton Hills MP Mike Chong visited the Acton Seniors' Centre for a get-to-know-you and question and answer session. — Frances Niblock photos



HELLO, SENIORS says Mike Chong.

Seniors question MP Mike Chong on pensions

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Money — how much they get and how to keep it — was on the minds of several Acton seniors during a visit by Wellington-Halton Hills Conservative MP Mike Chong to the Acton Seniors Centre on Thursday.

Chong told a small group of seniors that his "big news" was the recently announced increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

"By January 2007, the government will increase payments to single seniors by \$36 a month, about \$400 a year, and for couples, they will increase it \$70 a month,

which will be approximately \$700-\$800," Chong said.

He noted the government also announced plans to expand the caregiver tax deduction tax credit to include siblings, not just direct family members like parents or children.

Asked about how Canadian government pensions are funded, Chong said the Old Age Security payment is funded from the general tax base and is income-tested.

He said the Canadian Pension Plan system is secure and fully funded by two components, with investments in the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and in government bonds.

Former Acton businessman Paul Neilson complained that the government had clawed back his Old Age Security payment because he earned too much and also taxed any benefits he did receive.

"All government income supplements are taxed," Chong said, adding that the federal and provincial governments have a limited amount of money.

"There isn't an unlimited honey pot, so if the government were going to lift the rules and eliminate the claw back in Old Age Security so everybody gets it, well, that money would have to come from somewhere — higher taxes or cuts in other programs

and that would be a "zero sum gain," Chong said.

Chong stressed that the Canada Pension Plan is fully funded after Acton senior Mac Sprowl told him about a truck driver he knows whose private pension was recently halved to \$200 monthly.

He said while public pension plans are secure, there is legitimate concern over some private plans.

"Working people today pay a lot more into the CPP than people two generations ago did, so if you were born in 1930 or 1940 and are retiring, you made a very good return on your investment," Chong said, adding five years ago the government significantly increased CPP premiums to afford the pay outs.

The talk then switched from pensions to politics as Chong was questioned about the on-going government inquiry into the Liberal party's sponsorship scandal.

"I think that a political price should be paid for this — you know, \$100-million over four years with very little return for the money spent, or it went to line the pockets of people with very close ties to the Liberal party — somebody needs to be hung for this," Chong said, adding he can't

Town Digest

No fees waived

Habitat for Humanity Halton (HFHH) must pay \$18,000 in Regional development charges and user fees for the house it built in Acton on Crescent Street.

Halton Council recently rejected Habitat's request for exemption from the fees and repayment of the money, based on a staff report that said there is no exemption available under the development charges or user fee bylaws, and no Regional program exists that provides grants to this type of project.

In 2002, Halton Council approved \$8,400 of a requested \$14,000 from Habitat for a house it built in Burlington, and also approved a plan so Council could help groups like Habitat.

That program was referred back to staff in 2003 in anticipation of federal and provincial housing initiatives and while there now is a program in place, primarily for rental housing but with a small homeownership component, Halton hasn't decided if it will participate because the program is being re-designed.

Susan Goetz, the chair of HFHH's board of directors said once Halton develops its housing strategy, she would be back to again ask for an exemption to the develop-

ment fees, water and sewer connection charges and an urban frontage fee for the nine additional houses HFHH will build in Halton by the end of 2006.

"It's a fair whack of money and Halton can help us build affordable housing by waiving these fees," Goetz said on Friday, adding non-profit groups providing housing that Halton can't afford to, need the relief.

Politician's pay

The total tab for salary and benefits, conferences and seminars and "other" costs for Town politicians were \$281,278 last year.

The mandatory report to Council from the treasurer shows that Mayor Rick Bonnette earned \$53,162 in salary and benefits, and received \$2,243 for conferences and seminars and \$2,574 for "other" which includes mileage.

Acton Councillor Jon Hurst was the top earner among councillors with a total of \$24,145, which includes \$22,812 in salary and benefits, \$500 for conferences and seminars and \$833 for "other."

He was followed by Councillor Bob Inglis (\$24,054), Councillor Mike Davis (\$23,516) and then Councillor Clark Somerville (\$23,165.)

The Town also paid a total of \$3,822 to the seven members of the committee of adjustment, \$750 to the three members of the property standards committee and \$300 to the three members of the fence viewing committee.

wait for the final report from the hearing.

Chong had contacted the Acton Seniors' Centre to ask if he could come and speak with them, as he has done with seniors in Erin and Georgetown.

Daffodil Days on April threshold

Spring is almost here and it means it is also time for the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Sales!

Look for daffodil sellers around Acton from Thursday, March 31 until Saturday April 2. Pick up a bunch for \$6.00 or 2 for \$10.00.

Proceeds from every bunch of daffodils go to the Canadian Cancer Society research and support services for cancer patients and early detection and risk reduction programs.

Acton branch of the Cancer Society is also looking for interested volunteers to canvass in Acton at various locations during the April door-to-door fund raising campaign. Interested? Call (519) 853-0585 to volunteer and receive a big thank you.

ROCKY RIDGE RANCH
phone: (905) 854-2584
phone/fax: (905) 854-0964
website: www.rockyridgeranch.org

Activities:

*Horseback Riding
*Learn to groom and saddle your horse
*Ball Hockey
*Co-operative Games
*Nature Hikes/Snow Activities
*Cozy Fire, Table Games & Hot Chocolate

MARCH 14-18 2005
8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

AGES: 9& UP
\$40.00
per day
(includes GST)

Bring your own lunch (peanut free)
We will provide a snack in the afternoon

Please phone to register by March 9th



Access your hydro account anytime

An exciting new service for residential and small commercial customers of Halton Hills Hydro.

- Review your billing history
- Easy on-line registration
- 24 hour convenience
- Sign up today



In conjunction with Halton Hills Hydro's Conservation and Demand Management program.

For easy to follow instructions on our website:

- 1) Just log on at www.haltonhillshydro.com
- 2) Select 'View Your Account Info Online'
- 3) Select 'Create PIN' with your account number found on your last statement.

You can reach us at:
43 Alice Street
Acton, ON L7J 2A9
Ph: 519-853-3701
Fax: 519-853-2621
inquiries@haltonhillshydro.com

Chiroprapist / Foot Specialist
DEANNA WILSON B.Sc., D.Ch.
Thompson Wellness Centre
25 Main Street North
Acton, Ontario L7J 1V9
519-853-3460

- Foot/Nail Care
- Sports Injuries
- Pediatrics
- Diabetic / Arthritic
- Foot Conditioning
- Custom Orthotics and Footwear
- Home visits