

Your Chamber – Local, Provincial and National

My year as your Chamber president certainly went by quickly. It was a wonderful and enlightening experience. I know Jamie Schumacker will work diligently on your behalf as well.

In September I had the privilege of attending the Canadian Chamber of Commerce annual meeting in Markham. The CCC has a full slate of issues to bring forth to the federal government, as voted on by the 197 delegates in attendance.

Fifty seven resolutions were tabled and debated. The issues ranged from finance and taxation to environment and natural resources, industry, international affairs, justice, social policy, and transportation and infrastructure.

Here are but a few of the highlights of the resolutions put forward. In finance and taxation there is a recommendation to make headway in 2008 towards increasing the basic personal exemption to \$10,000; raise the threshold for the top marginal personal income tax rates; reduce the general

corporate income tax rate to 20% for 2008 and by 1% annually for each of the following 5 years.

Another recommendation is to continue to invest in productivity-enhancing infrastructure, including transportation and border infrastructure, and to encourage private sector participation.

Productivity is an important concern. China has surpassed Canada as the US's number one trading partner. We need to increase both our productivity and competitiveness.

The CCC is recommending that the federal government introduce tax-prepaid savings programs alongside RRSPs and that contribution limits be fully integrated. They are also asking for further reductions in EI premiums for employers.

We're requesting a deferral of income taxation on taxable capital gains incurred whenever the proceeds are reinvested within a six-month period. They are recommending that the government make an allowance of 3.3% of the GST rebate for businesses collecting the GST on the government's behalf.

We believe that access to CPP at age 60 should be allowed for everyone, regardless of employment status; that there needs to be greater protection of intellectual property in Canada, and that more needs to be done to prevent identity theft as well as to control spam and other threats to the online marketplace.

We need an accessible and efficient Canadian passport system, with ten-year validity instead of the current five, and an expedited renewal process.

Some of the social issues we are addressing include the need to create incentives to continue working past age 65 to help alleviate the shortage of skilled workers businesses will face, if they haven't already. A national adult literacy policy is needed to help boost productivity. Comprehension and clear understanding are needed by workers. We encourage the government to recognize literacy as the foundational essential skill for employment.

It can be easy sometimes to lose sight of all the benefits of chamber membership. The advocacy done both provincially and federally is one of those huge but unfortunately, often overlooked benefits of belonging. Your membership allows both the OCC and the CCC to advocate and lobby on your behalf to government to make changes in policy that are beneficial for you and your business. And that's good for everyone.

Helen MacCormack, Past President, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

**From
the
Boardroom**

**Helen
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Halton Place: the Spirit of Competition

*By Marnie Hughes,
Communication Artistry*

Halton Place is a breathtaking country setting for equestrian clinics, demonstrations, seminars and team-building exercises. It has been a proven venue for national equestrian events for the past decade. Halton Place offers the public a rare opportunity to enjoy one of the agricultural spaces in the region and in so doing educate them to what beauty exists here and remind them that support is needed for a sustainable future.

Halton Place was created by owner, Timur Leckebusch who grew up in the Black Forest area of Germany and immigrated to Canada in 1986. Three years later, Timur purchased the land where Halton Place now sits. It was then one of the largest hog farms in southern Ontario, housing up to 15,000 pigs in 80,000 square feet of barns. Since refurbishing the original property, he has purchased an adjacent 100 acres, bringing the total size of Halton Place to 200 acres neighbouring the Niagara Escarpment. The original farmhouse dates back to 1832 and was built with limestone extracted from the property.

Timur is passionate about developing the sport of show jumping and the breeding of sport horses in Canada. He would like to see the Canadian Equestrian Team return to their glory days of the '60s, '70s and '80s on the international stage. He has ambitious long-range growth plans to create a world class show jumping venue at Halton Place. Their location on 15th Sideroad near Highway 25 is central to horse enthusiasts in King, Schomberg, and Kitchener making it an ideal gathering spot for tournaments.

One of their annual tournaments, the "Canadian Country Classic", is a showcase for the grounds and facilities. It is a competition for two modern equestrian disciplines.

They are the Hunter discipline, which is riding at a consistent speed over uneven or rough terrain including fences and hedges and the Show Jumping discipline where a horse/ rider pair are judged on time and fault performance only. In addition to the horse shows, there are several other attractions to keep visitors engaged during their stay. Many families come to enjoy a day of horse shows and other demonstrations and the organizers are delighted to offer this variety so that visitors may enjoy a fulfilling country experience.

Halton Place and its many farming neighbours acknowledge that the agricultural industry is evolving and that they must seek out alternate methods to generate revenue in order to operate a profitable farm business.

Agritourism plays a large role in keeping the business viable without the need for subsidies. Agricultural land on the edge of urban boundaries is particularly at risk for becoming consumed as the urban areas continue to encroach on the land.

One possible method for making the business sustainable is through opening the doors to alternate uses such as weddings or other events where people can enjoy the fresh air, rolling hills and wide open spaces

of the country that encourages them to preserve and protect the land. Halton Place currently sustains its operation through horse breeding, selling of horses, competition, and an apple orchard. They also produce their own hay for their horses in order to minimize operating costs.

One of the biggest challenges that Halton Place faces is in the perception that breeding and showing horses is not viewed as agriculture. Administrative red tape and lack of education are barriers to agritourism.

Meg Krueger, Halton Place General Manager, chairs the Agricultural Business Development Committee (a sub-committee of the Business Development Committee at the Chamber of Commerce) representing local farming businesses. This committee welcomes input regarding agricultural business development from the chamber membership and would appreciate any suggestions that the membership can offer on what can be done to help local farmers.

Meg is also a board member of the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture and the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee. If you have any comments or questions, please contact Meg Krueger at (905) 873-2316.



Megan Krueger, Halton Place General Manager