

FALL SALE

Valid for specific departures Nov.1- Dec.17/07

\$699

Puerto Vallarta Hola Vallarta

Fri., Mon. +\$277 Tax

Cancun Mexico Dos Playas

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Club Amigo Tropical Fri., \$209 tax

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Bahia Principe San Juan

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Blau Costa Verde

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Los Cabos, Mexico

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Curacao

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Gran Bahia Principe Bavaro

Junior Suite -

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Cancun Holguin, Cuba

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Viva Wyndham Azteca Gran

Bahai Principe Tulum

Hotel Room,

Thu., Fri., Mon. +\$277 tax

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Curbing urban sprawl, improving public transit, Mike Chong's way

By Rebecca Ring

Infrastructure, transportation, urban sprawl and agriculture were the big issues discussed in Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong's meeting with Guelph/Eramosa council last week.

Regarding infrastructure, Councillor Doug Breen said, "Hats off to both the Federal and Provincial governments for the COMRIF and gas tax funding we've received, but could there be an easier way rather than constantly applying for these grants? It is important to know what we can expect."

Manager of Public Works, Ken Gagnon added, "It's tough to develop long-term capital plans for roads and bridges when we don't know what funds will be available five years out."

Chong replied that it is difficult to make commitments beyond seven years: "Who knows what will happen to revenue and costs? There is consistent funding for a lot of programs in the last budget." He pointed out the added pressures in the township being in a watershed area which has ten times the average number of bridges.

"It's difficult to decide who pays for what. Some say municipalities, some say more involvement from the federal government. The report from the provincial premier's task force on fiscal imbalance is due next year on how to better structure funding between the province and the government," Chong added, shifting the focus to the province.

Not paying

He said that population growth is not paying for itself and when a municipality grows, it affects all surrounding areas in terms of traffic, etc. "Development charges are not sufficient. Ratepayers pick up the costs, in effect subsidizing new development," he added.

Mayor Chris White brought up the province's potential plans to build a 400-series highway in the area. "I am opposed to another 400 highway. Money should be put into public transportation instead. New highways will not solve congestion problems. Look at L.A.," Chong replied. "We're living in a fool's paradise. This is not good public policy. It's thinking from the 1950's," the MP said.



Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong

Breen agreed, pointing to the removal of trains from Eden Mills to Toronto that travelled several times a day. "In the 1950s they took it out and replaced it with highways. It's an absolute bust," he said.

White asked Chong what the federal government's role would be in expanding the GO Transit rail system. He answered that it has jurisdiction over railroads and rail lines and said his government is willing to do it if proposed. "The province is committed to putting money into highways instead. This will be a disaster in 20 years, with the population predicted to double in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, with more chaos and more sprawl. More money needs to go into public transit," he said, adding that he took a copy of a GO Transit study for Brampton, Acton, Georgetown, Kitchener-Waterloo and London to the Ministers of Transport and Finance.

He is also working with Waterloo Region on its

Light Rapid Transit project.

Chong criticized the province's Places to Grow Plan, with its goal of "65% sprawl and only 35% intensification" to deal with the predicted population growth of almost double. He said this is not the way to go and more growth needs to take place in already developed areas like Brampton, Mississauga and Toronto.

"Five to eight storey buildings are all that are needed. We have a choice. We can wreck the environment, pave over agricultural land, have more smog and congestion or we can do better to protect green space and agriculture."

Councillor Reta Moyer asked where the projected growth will come from. Chong replied it would come mostly from immigration. "Will the federal government assist immigrants to assimilate into the Canadian way of life, and not bring their anger and fights? In this country, you are not seen

as big and important if you elbow your way to the front of the line, but look uneducated and ignorant instead," Moyer said.

Chong said this is a separate issue from growth and immigration has "by and large been successful." He said he argues for public debate on the optimal population size for Canada.

Low farm increase

Councillor John Scott asked Chong what the Ministry of Agriculture is doing about increasing commercialization of crops. He answered that last year was a record low for agricultural income in the last five years: "We have put \$2.5 billion into agriculture and still there are chronic long term problems."

Moyer brought up the supply management system, which Chong said he supports. He explained that imports are banned, prices are set, and a farmer's collective marketing board controls milk, chicken, turkey, eggs and hatchers. "These are all Canadian and all protected. This is under increasing pressure from the WTO."

He added that these are the only agricultural sectors that have been profitable and not needed handouts in 30 years of existence.

Moyer also asked about the federal government's plans to harmonize standards to facilitate international trade, which she said would

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Writers' Festival all set to go

By Rebecca Ring

The Eden Mills Writers Festival is all set for its 19th year. The popular celebration of arts and literature will begin with the *Jazz Composer's Workshop*, Friday, September 7 from 10am to 6pm at the Eden Mills Community Centre, 108 York St. Jazz artists can hone their skills under the direction of Dave McMurdo and Mike Malone; accomplished musicians, composers and teachers.

That evening, the public is invited to *Jazz at Eden Mills* at 7:30pm. McMurdo and Malone will join Quinsin Nachoff, Kevin Dempsey, Geoff Young and Pat Collins in concert at the community hall. Tickets are available at Wild Rose Consignment or call (519) 856-0968.

One can learn about the TV and film industry at the Saturday Seminar, *Reel Writing: Screenwriting in the Real World*, on September 8, from 1 to 6pm at Camp Edgewood, a covered outdoor setting. Panelists include Tassie Cameron, Andrew Clark, Esta Spalding, and Drew Hayden-Taylor who have all written for film and television. They will speak about the life of a screenwriter and some things everybody should know before "pitching" their script. For reservations, call (519) 856-1089. Tickets are available at the door or The Bookshelf in Guelph.

The main event will take place on Sunday, September 9 from noon until 6pm. Published and award-winning authors of all genres and backgrounds will read from their works at three outdoor sites in the village on the banks of the Eramosa River. The popular Aboriginal, Young Adult, Fringe, and Children's venues will also run throughout the afternoon.

The main street of Eden Mills will be transformed into *Publishers' Way*, where book publishers and sellers, magazine producers, and non-profit groups such as PEN showcase their wares, and authors sign their works. Live music is provided between reading sets and an array of refreshments will be available at the food court.

The most notable change at this year's festival will be the replacement of bottled water with a supply of fresh potable water. Guelph/Eramosa Public Works Manager Ken Gagnon says that his department is following all safety and health regulations to provide a tanker full of fresh, clean drinking water where festival-goers can fill up their own drinking containers free of charge.

For further information about the 19th annual Eden Mills Writers' Festival, including confirmed authors, location and tickets, visit www.edenmillswritersfestival.ca.