

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Up your bike

One really has to wonder why the Ontario government would pick this time of year to exempt bicycles, bike helmets and select bike safety equipment with a price tag of less than \$1,000 from the Ontario Provincial Sales Tax (PST). However, on reflection, it makes sense because sales of bicycles and equipment are higher due to the Christmas season.

Of course, the kids who get their first bicycle Christmas won't be able to use them when there's snow on the road, but when better weather comes, they'll be aching to try out their new wheels. And one of the objectives of making a bike purchase more affordable is to get Ontario's kids more active. Many of them are couch potatoes or scrunched up with computer games and missing the exercise needed while they are growing up.

It's going to cost the government about \$25 million each year (your money), but the benefits of removing the tax from bicycles will exceed the cost if it gets the kids outdoors and more active. One of the afflictions troubling society these days is obesity among not only adults but children as well. Much of it is the result of eating habits but inactivity also plays a big part.

According to the Sightline Institute, "Pound for pound, a person on a bicycle expends less energy than any creature or machine covering the same distance." So not only does the bicycle contribute to making people fit, it actually is an aid to the environment. Bicycles do not emit greenhouse gases or contribute to our carbon imprint.

On the financial side, it costs an estimated \$200 a year to maintain a bike plus money for accessories. Compare that to the estimated \$7,500 the average Canadian pays to own a car.

Health benefits? Thirty minutes of brisk cycling several times a week reduce the risks of developing coronary heart disease, adult diabetes and obesity by as much as 50%, according to The David Suzuki Foundation. So there's a lot of sense in removing that PST from bicycles.

CTF has a point

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) has a point in its new petition calling on the province not to give new taxing powers to other Ontario municipalities like it did to Toronto through the City of Toronto Act.

The petition points out the Act granted Toronto new taxing powers on January 1 of this year. So far, Toronto has imposed three new taxes on residents, one on garbage, a vehicle registration tax and a bond transfer tax. It is also considering adding more new taxes on such items as liquor, road tolls, billboards and even one on sidewalks.

As the CTF points out, during the recent provincial election the government promised not to raise taxes to Ontarians. By giving the municipalities more taxing powers it's accomplishing the very same thing with some slight of hand and obfuscation.



AN ENGLISH CHRISTMAS: Rev. Jenkins, with wife Joan, left, enjoy Churchill Church's English Christmas Tea on Saturday, Dec. 1. Along with tea, cranberry scones, raspberry jam, finger foods and coffee were served by teen volunteers. There was also a baked good sale table, made by church members and raffles with lots of Christmas prizes. This is the sixth year that the tea has run and all proceeds go to fundraising for Churchill Church programs. - Submitted photo

Letters



Christmas is about sharing...

To the editor,

The 5th annual Community Christmas Dinner in Acton is again on Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25, 2007 at Beth-El Christian Reformed Church, Acton (across from Home Hardware - wheelchair accessible). Doors open at 1 p.m.

A group of friends are busy planning a turkey dinner with all of the trimmings for people look-

ing for something special to do on Christmas Day. In past years the dinner has been prepared by members of the community who shared samples of their excellent cooking skills with us. Other people supported the dinner by helping to set up, serve, or assist with the clean up. Many of these people also joined us for the meal. Good times were had by all!

We would like to continue with these traditions and invite you to join us for a special Christmas dinner celebration! If you think you might enjoy a get together in a caring and celebrative atmosphere, please come out and join us.

RSVP to Ann
519-853-3687,
transportation is available.

Animals, staff say thank you

To the editor,

On behalf of the many animals up for adoption at Toronto Animal Services - South, I would like to thank the generous Acton residents that dropped off towels and blankets at Pet Valu in Acton. It took two trips to the South Shelter to finally deliver all of the donations to the appreciative TAS staff.

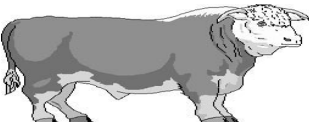
A special thank you to Rhonda at Pet Valu for being central drop off. These towels will be used for the dogs and cats that come into the shelter to cozy up with. The towel becomes familiar to the pet and is then given to their new family when the animal is adopted. Toby (just adopted) and Cheeto (a kitten currently up for adoption) are some of

the pets who enjoyed some of the towels at Toronto Animal Service - South.

For more animals looking for a home visit www.toronto.ca/animal_services

With grateful thanks,
on behalf of the animals and staff at TAS - South,
Arlene Fritz

What's Your Beef?



Put it in a letter to the Editor!

Deadline is Tuesday at noon.



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