



Surrounded by development

Some can't wait to get away, others not budging

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

Long-time Milton farmer Cecil Patterson remembers when agricultural land dominated the area around his family farm on Fourth Line.

It was a time when only a handful of cars traveled by his home on an average day, and if he looked out the window he could see clear across the fields to Derry Road.

Now when Mr. Patterson casts his eyes south, he sees the backs of dozens of new homes that've popped up over the past few years in the Hawthorne Village subdivision, abutting the farmland where he tends to his cash crops.

And these days when he takes to the road with some of his farm machinery, he now has to watch out for the many pedestrians and cyclists that use the once-rural route.

"The biggest change is listening to the (ice cream) truck — it's something I'm not used to," he said.

While he said about 30 or 40 developers, builders and speculators have approached them over the past 20 years looking to buy up the large farm, he said they have no foreseeable plans to sell the land that's been in the Patterson name since 1840.

"The roots go pretty deep here," he said, noting it's for personal and family reasons that the farm hasn't been sold.

But at the time when development started to boom in Milton, Mr. Patterson said he didn't try to fight it.

"We (farmers) thought we can't fight this — we're outnumbered," he said, explaining many local farmers sold their properties in the '60s and '70s, leaving few family farms in the area.

"We had to go along with it. We couldn't stand up as a united farmers' front."

While he didn't want to name who has stopped



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Cecil Patterson of Fourth Line, who's held off selling his family farm, says he's getting used to all the residential development that surrounds him.

by to try to buy his land, he did say that most of the major developers in town have approached him.

"It's almost amusing at times because of their (developers') great anticipation," he said, explaining developers will come with big offers — exceeding what farmers usually earn — and they expect he'll be impressed.

"After awhile, you don't get too impressed anymore," he said.

Despite the fact Mr. Patterson said it was a "big shock" at first to have a residential subdivision as part of his scenery, he said it's something he doesn't mind so much now.

"I just tend to focus my attention on the other direction," he said.

Ironically, one of the streets in the new subdivision carries his family name, Patterson Drive.

He noted that the new residents have been very respectful of the property line and most of them stay on their side of the fence.

"Some actually make an effort to come over and say hello and introduce themselves," he said.

He added that his new neighbours are "slowly coming around to the farmer style, (which means) if you're driving by and you see a farmer on a tractor and he waves, you should wave back."

While the Pattersons have stayed put through the massive growth that's hit Milton, some other Fourth Line residents can't wait to get away from the new development.

Steve Goncalves and his parents, who lived on the west side of Fourth Line just south of Derry Road, moved this week in an effort to escape the

heavy residential development that's faken over the land all around them.

"We moved here seven years ago from Mississauga because of the quietness," the 22-year-old said.

But subdivisions have since popped up beside their home and across the road.

"It's brutal — there's lots of extra traffic," he said. "It seems like the infrastructure isn't there yet to handle it."

Now, they've gone to a property at the Third Line and Britannia Road to get back to the country living that originally attracted them to Milton.

Moving away from the recently developed area of town is something Fourth Line resident John Moreel — who lives just north of Derry Road on the west side — is also hoping to do.

"I like my privacy," he said, looking across the road at what was once a horse farm but has now been replaced by a wall of houses.

He told The Champion that since the new houses went up, he's seen a jump in the amount of garbage on the side of the road near his house and has had his mail stolen.

"I've also had an increase in the wildlife that comes here," he said, noting he thinks his property has become one of the few places for these animals to go now.

But one day, the property Mr. Moreel has lived on for eight years could very well be developed. He said he's actually renting the house he's in and a developer owns the property, but he wouldn't say if it was a private developer or a corporation or give a name.

Having their property bought by a developer is something many people wouldn't want to see, but Mr. Moreel's neighbour, Danny Figliola, said in a sense he wishes that would happen for him and his wife.

"We want to get out of here," he said, noting his house is up for sale. "We just kind of feel everything's been catered to the subdivision people and we're being kicked out."

He said he's lived on the Fourth Line for about three-and-a-half years now and was aware of the development before he bought the house. But, he said he wasn't told about the road he lives on being closed permanently, which has also contributed to his decision to move.

Now, he said they're looking for a house that's in a more rural area — something they once had at their Fourth Line home.

"We like Milton, we want to stay close, just out of the subdivision."

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