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Local merchant condemns Chamber of Commerce

Francophone residents of Penetanguishene have been made to feel like second-class citizens for too long, according to local merchant and past director of the Penetanguishene Chamber of Commerce Romeo Asselin.

Mr. Asselin recently sent a letter of protest to Chamber of Commerce president Gerry Light. (A copy of that letter was also sent to the Citizen, and is on page four of this issue.)

According to Mr. Asselin, the Chamber has a responsibility to promote Penetanguishene as a town with two cultures, French Canadian, and English Canadian.

The Chamber is not upholding that responsibility he claims.

"In the past, the Chamber has published brochures and other material in both French and English," Mr. Asselin explained, "but over the past two years, all material published by the Chamber has been English—that's just one example."

During his time as president of the Chamber, Mr. Asselin developed a number of brochures that promoted Penetanguishene as a French-English

community.

"I tried to make the community see Penetanguishene as a bilingual and bi-cultural area," Mr. Asselin said.

According to Mr. Asselin, someone in the Chamber is trying to go backwards in regards to the French nature of the town.

The Chamber should be taking steps to stop the assimilation of French speaking residents in Penetanguishene, he said.

He cites one example as French speaking people who are not comfortable speaking French in local shops and businesses.

"In many cases it's easier to speak French in a Midland store than in a Penetanguishene store," Mr. Asselin said.

If that situation doesn't change, French speaking people from Penetanguishene, and surrounding places like Lafontaine, will begin to go to Midland to do their business, according to Mr. Asselin.

He has a number of examples of how local merchants have actually taken a step backwards in the area of French speaking patrons.

"I'm not blaming the Chamber for this, but

one shop that used bilingual signs, has now taken them down and has only English signs," he said.

The Chamber has in the past promoted the French aspects of the town, according to Mr. Asselin, but in the last few years they have stopped doing that.

"It has been two years since the Chamber has done anything in that area—in fact, they are going backwards," he said.

Mr. Asselin has been trying to promote the bilingual nature of Penetanguishene for the past 20 years, and he is a member of the French Language Advisory Committee (FLAC).

Flac, he is doing its best to preserve and promote the French language and culture in the area, but it can only do so much, according to Mr. Asselin.

"Sure, Flac is doing the best it can, but we're only an advisory committee, and that limits what we can and can't do," he said.

Mr. Asselin doesn't want to cause a rift amongst the residents of Penetanguishene. He hopes that the French language and culture can be preserved without alienating

anyone.

"We're hoping to accomplish what's necessary without polarizing the residents, or anyone for that matter," he said.

He also feels that the much talked about revitalizing of the downtown district, is a good idea, but it doesn't go far enough.

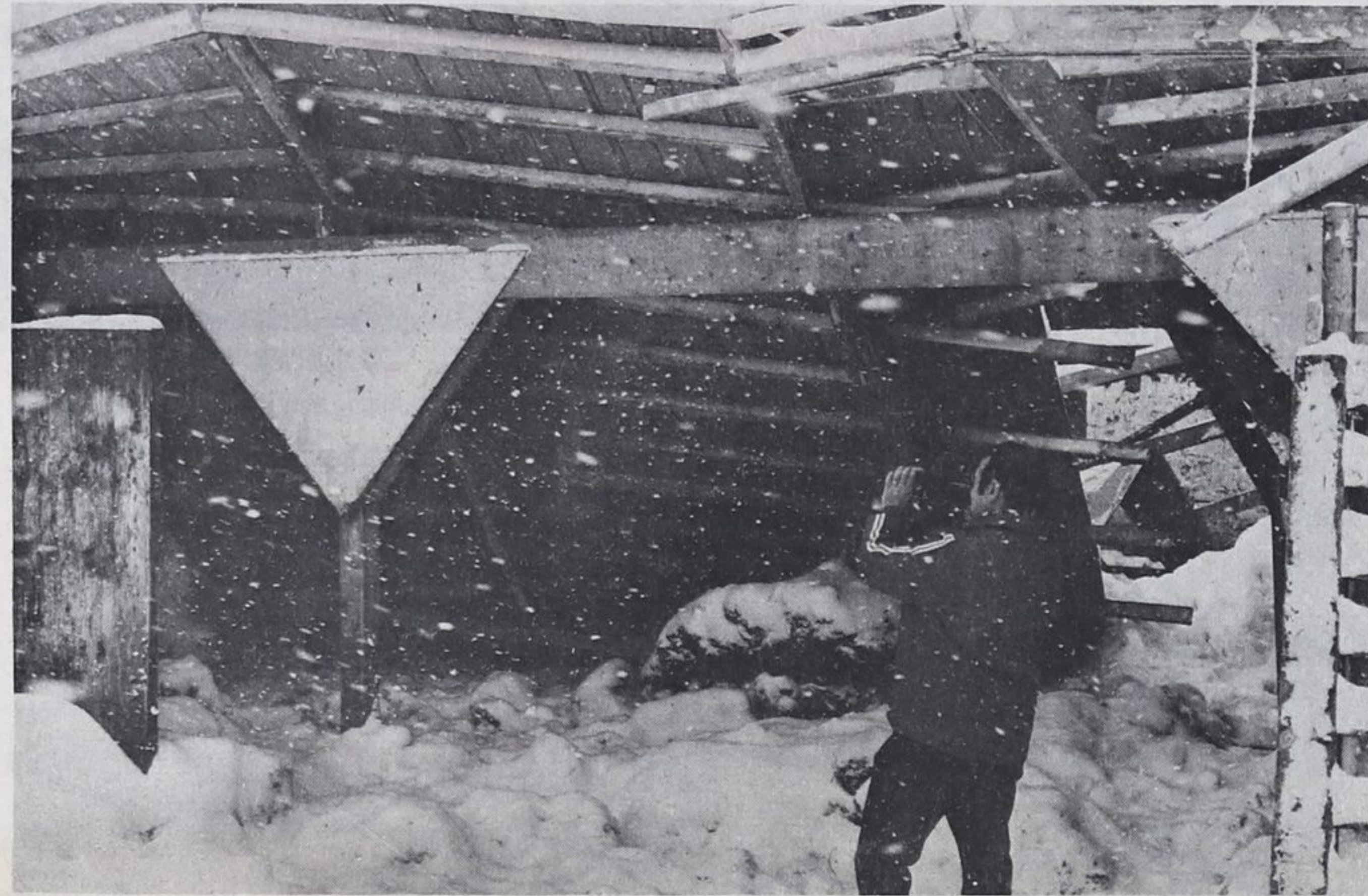
Mr. Asselin feels that along with revitalizing the business district, the town should be trying to make French speaking residents and visitors feel welcome and comfortable.

There has been an increased awareness on the part of French speaking residents over the past few years, according to Mr. Asselin.

"Twenty years ago, I was crying in the wilderness, but now at least we're in tune with the problem," he said.

Mr. Asselin is determined to fight the assimilation of French speaking residents, but he feels the process is already under way.

"(Assimilation) won't happen if I can help it, but it's starting to come about pretty damn fast... I don't intend to give up the battle as long as the Lord gives me health," he said.



Roof collapses

High winds and an unusually heavy snowfall combined to create a potentially dangerous situation early last Thursday morning at the farm of Martin Genier, near Lafontaine. A

cattle loafing barn housing 125 beef cattle collapsed, and for a while, Mr. Genier was afraid that some animals had been trapped under the debris. However, a quick count of

the cattle indicated that most had escaped from the collapsed shelter, although Mr. Genier was unsure if all of them had. He says he will rebuild the structure. Staff photo

Farmer loses barn to wind

The heavy winds and snowfalls of last week may have caused area residents lots of problems in getting to work, school, or wherever it is necessary to drive a car, but for one Lafontaine farmer the atrocious weather spelled extra problems.

On Thursday morning Martin Genier awoke to discover that a combination of snow and high winds had collapsed the roof of a loafing barn that housed 125 beef cattle.

Mr. Genier says that at first he feared that some of his animals were trapped under the fallen structure, but a quick count of the herd indicated that most of them had somehow

managed to escape out into the barnyard.

"I was sure there were some dead animals, but luckily they must have got out before the whole thing collapsed," he commented.

He said Friday that he was unsure whether all had escaped injury in the accident, as it is difficult to count a herd of constantly milling animals.

Mr. Genier, who has worked the Lafontaine farm all his life said that some neighbours had suggested that the weight of the snow on the loafing barn's roof had caused the accident. However, he feels that it was a gust of wind catching under the corrugated roof

which resulted in the collapse.

"That barn has been up for six years, and I've seen snow ten times as heavy on the roof. We're in a really open area here, and the wind just whips across," he remarked, pointing to the flat, barren fields that surround his property.

Mr. Genier has moved his cattle into the farm's main barn. He says he doesn't know how much damage was incurred in the barn's collapse.

He says that he will have to rebuild the structure this winter, as the main barn is not large enough to house his whole herd.

Rescued after 10 hours Local family stranded

by Dave Wilson

Four members of a Port McNicoll family are considering themselves "very lucky" this week, after having been stranded for close to ten hours on Highway 401 near Woodstock during the devastating blizzard which paralyzed much of Southern Ontario last Thursday.

called a "wall of snow". They proceeded to follow a bus, whose lights could be dimly seen through the blinding snow. After a short while, the bus collided with a tractor trailer that was stopped in the roadway. The bus fishtailed, and the Clarke vehicle ran into its rear.

brought with them. Mrs. Clarke had also packed some food for the journey, and by periodically eating, they were able to stave off the sub-zero temperatures.

Parents and two sons

Mr. and Mrs. Wes Clarke of Simcoe Street in Port McNicoll, along with two young sons had to be rescued by a four wheel drive vehicle after snow driven by hurricane force winds forced them to halt a journey from Midland to Port Huron Michigan, where they had been travelling to see two other sons participate in a Silver Stick hockey competition.

Although damage to their car was minimal, the Clarks were forced to halt their journey. Mrs. Clarke said that it was approximately 8:30 a.m. when the incident occurred.

Told stories to pass time

She said that the family told stories and played cards to help pass the time.

At approximately 6 p.m., shortly after the sun had gone down, the Clarks heard a knocking on the car window. The knocks were from the owner of a four wheel drive vehicle who had been breaking through 10 to 14 foot snowdrifts to rescue stranded motorists. He ferried the family into Woodstock, where they spent the night.

Three dead two cars away

Only two cars away from the stranded Clarke vehicle was an automobile in which it was later discovered three people had perished.

Damage to car minimal

She said that winds were so strong and cold that the throttle on their car froze open, and by 11 they had run out of gasoline.

For the next seven hours until they were rescued, the Clarke car was without heat. The car windows frosted over, and they were unable to see outside. Mrs. Clarke said that they knew they were not alone in their predicament, but were afraid to leave the car.

Car towed to Woodstock

The next day the Clarke auto was towed into Woodstock, and the day after that, they proceeded on to Port Huron.

Mrs. Clarke said that she has heard of two other cars from Midland which were stranded in the snowstorm. She added that the occupants of both cars were reportedly rescued by snowmobiles.

You didn't dare leave

"You didn't dare leave - you couldn't see a foot in front of you. The winds were so bad that we were afraid we'd get lost if we went out."

To try and keep warm, the Clarks kept their feet off the floor boards, which had become bitterly cold from the wind whipping underneath the car. They took turns sitting on each other's feet, and wrapped themselves in a blanket and banner they had

As far as their own ordeal is concerned, Mrs. Clarke said that she "is thankful that we got out alright." She added that the experience was one she "wouldn't want to have to go through again."

"I think we're still getting over the exhaustion," she said.

Trial to go on for 14 weeks

"My needs are not going to change," replied Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith, when asked if she will go along with the courts decision, to use an interpreter.

Ms. Guay-Galbraith was charged by OPP Constable Phil Walsh on July 23, 1977 with careless driving.

Since that time she has made three court appearances and she will make another 14 appearances, one a week, from now until May 11 when the court will provide a professional interpreter, possibly from the Toronto area.

On Thursday, January 26, the date of the last court hearing, a Fernand Maurice was brought forward as interpreter for the court.

Ms. Guay-Galbraith had stated to the court that as a French-Canadian woman she had a right to defend herself in her mother tongue without the use of an interpreter.

Judge Len Montgomery, who presided over this hearing said, "this area has not been designated as a French court area." He went on to say that the court must comply with procedure at the time of the hearing.

The court entered a non-guilty plea on behalf of the accused. Constable Walsh was

brought forward to give his testimony.

It was obvious to the Judge that though Mr. Maurice tried to keep up with the testimony of Officer Walsh that he was unable to do so. The interpreter indicated at this time that he did not feel qualified to translate. Judge Montgomery consulted with the Crown and decided to remand the hearing until May 11, provided that Ms. Guay-Galbraith would agree to a professional interpreter.

Ms. Guay-Galbraith responded, "with all due respect that I owe the court I refuse to have an interpreter." Judge Montgomery put the case over for one week and will keep doing so until May 11.

Judge Montgomery also told Ms. Guay-Galbraith during the proceedings that there were other ways to change the law other than to attempt to do so in the court room. According to Guay-Galbraith when asked about this at a later date she replied: "ACFO (Association Canadienne Francaise de l'Ontario) has been asking for services and justice in French for sometime."

When asked specifically how she felt about the numerous court appearances ahead of

her Ms. Guay-Galbraith said, "I don't think the court handled this situation in a competent manner. By using this kind of tactic are they trying to break me...intimidate me?"

She repeated, "my needs are not going to change. I have to be fair and honest with myself. In legal matters it is very important that you understand the exact meaning every detail of what is being said. When I'm in this situation I have to put forward the fact that this is unjust."

This case has caused considerable attention to be focussed on this area. Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith has been interviewed by CBC (French) Radio Canada and a filmed interview was conducted in front of the Penetanguishene Court House by CBC crew for the CBC National News.

Ms. Guay-Galbraith has accomplished one of her objectives to publicize her need for a French trial in Ontario. She has not secured what she desired most though, a trial completely conducted in her own language.

NIP program benefits residents

Penetanguishene residents can expect some major additions to present facilities by the year 1981, according to Neighborhood Improvement Plan (NIP) co-ordinator Ken Cousineau.

The first NIP grant was received by Penetanguishene in 1975. It was used to improve facilities in the west end of the town, and was in the amount of \$150,000.

In 1976, the second NIP grant, for \$300,000 was used for renovations in the east end of Penetanguishene, and recently, the provincial government approved a \$125,000 extension, also for the east end.

The majority of the new NIP funding will be spent on the Water Street area—to acquire abandoned CNR property around the railroad crossing.

According to Mr. Cousineau, the rest of the money will be used to institute improvements outlined in the East End Development Plan. That plan calls for improvements such as installation of storm sewers in some areas, and construction of off-street parking along Main Street.

News briefs

Cause of Sandy Bay fire unknown

Predictions that it may never be known what started the fire at the Sandy Bay Inn have proven to be correct.

According to Deputy Fire Chief Jim Lemieux, the cause of the fire has been officially labelled "undetermined" by fire marshal John MacKenzie and the investigation has ended.

Lemieux says MacKenzie narrowed the

cause of the fire down to a couple of things, but could not prove beyond a doubt that it was either one. Lemieux says before the fire marshal declares anything as the cause of a fire he must be able to back it up with evidence.

Last week, MacKenzie told a reporter it would be extremely difficult to determine where the Sandy Bay Inn fire had started because of the extent of the damage.

Drey and Boyd lock horns

Frank Drey, Minister of Corrections, made a recent statement, that upset many correctional authorities, including Dr. Barry Boyd, head of medical staff at Oak Ridge.

According to media sources, Mr. Drey said that he was in favour of mixing all sexual offenders to cut costs in the correctional system.

Following Mr. Drey's statement, Dr. Boyd was contacted by the media and asked what his opinion was regarding the statement.

"I originally heard the report on the radio, but I wanted to hear the minister speak to verify the facts," Dr. Boyd said.

Recently, Mr. Drey spoke in Barrie, and his opinions were much more moderate at that time according to Dr. Boyd.

"He didn't say the same things when he was in Barrie," Dr. Boyd said.

During the brief controversy, national media sources such as the Globe and Mail and the CBC carried items regarding the statements made by Mr. Drey.

Replacement needed for Boyd

Dr. Barry Boyd will shortly be retiring from his position as head of medical staff at Oak Ridge.

The position of medical director is presently being advertised in national

newspapers, to get a replacement for the popular Dr. Boyd.

It may take up to three months to process all applications and interview applicants, so a temporary medical director will be appointed from the Oak Ridge staff.

False alarms plague firemen

The Penetanguishene fire department is plagued by false alarms it seems. On Monday, a call to respond to a fire at the Aquarobic Home Sewage Treatment plant on Main Street.

Upon arriving the fire department discovered that the alarm was false.

According to one police officer who was on the scene, the problem stems from hydro work that is being done on Simcoe Street.

Apparently, the workers at that location struck a wrong wire, and it sounded the alarm that brought the fire men running.

Centennial coins become famous

Midland's centennial coin has gained recognition across the North American continent.

Centennial commissioner H.M. (Mac) Macleod reports that he has received orders for the coin from as far away as Halifax, and most recently, California.

The request from California came from a Mr. B.D. Black, who sent a letter to the centennial commissioner asking for a coin

after seeing a brief announcement of its issuing in the 'World Coin News', a periodical for coin enthusiasts.

Although the coins have received recognition from thousands of miles away, they have yet to go on sale in Midland. Commissioner Macleod says, however, that he is anticipating brisk sales.

"All kinds of people are giving me orders, so I expect that they're going to do well," he remarked.

Local MPP to visit town

George Taylor, MPP for Simcoe Center will be visiting Penetanguishene on February 14, from 9 p.m. to 4 p.m. He will be at the R.J. Cascagnette Insurance Office, 134 Main St.

According to Mr. Taylor's constituency office in Barrie, there are no definite plans for the engagement except that the MPP will be available to speak to his constituents and members of the community in general.