

# Orangeville Citizen

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The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of Error. - WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

## Solutions to the auto industry mess not easily found

ALL THE PUBLICITY concerning the "bailouts" for General Motors and Chrysler has tended to divert attention from the fact that almost all of the world's auto manufacturers are suffering.

In fact, the lone exception may be India's Tata Motors, which recently unveiled its little Nano, the stripped-down four-seat car that it's planning to sell for about \$2,500 Canadian dollars.

At a time when, despite all the recent price cuts, the cheapest North American car costs about four times as much, the popularity of the Nano seems assured, and a big question is whether we'll ever see a North American version of the 'cheapie'.

In this part of the world, the strikingly different situations at the Honda Canada plant in Alliston and the Chrysler Canada plant in Brampton still have a common factor, in a scaling down of production aimed at keeping pace with a sharply lower level of sales.

At Alliston, where Honda has clearly been laying off employees despite earlier assurances that loss of a third shift at its main plant would be accomplished by a form of job-sharing, there is at least no talk of a plant closing and sales of the popular Civic are still nearly 80 per cent of the level a year ago.

But at Brampton, the workers have no assurance that any of Chrysler's Canadian operations will survive the economic downturn, Chrysler president Tom Lasorda having warned that it may close all its Canadian operations absent agreements with its workers, creditors and suppliers that trigger multi-billion-dollar bailouts.

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) and Chrysler Canada have suspended official negotiations while the cash-strapped automaker focuses its efforts on working out a critical alliance with

Italian automaker Fiat.

CAW president Ken Lewenza said last week he believes Chrysler is focusing on the Fiat discussions because labour talks are "secondary" to the partnership, which many say is essential to Chrysler's survival.

"It's clear that if the Fiat merger doesn't come together then all the rest, quite frankly, is secondary," Lewenza told the National Post, confirming that face-to-face negotiations have been suspended.

The Canadian and U.S. federal governments have told both Chrysler and General Motors that they hadn't yet met the requirements for long-term bailout loans. GM was given 60 days to come up with a new plan, while Chrysler was given just 30 days to cement the Fiat alliance. Our federal and Ontario governments also provided Chrysler with \$250 million last week so the firm could make payroll commitments, yet production has been stalled because of a dispute with a key parts supplier in Wallaseburg which is itself facing financial peril.

A partnership with Fiat is seen as giving Chrysler access to smaller car technology that the firm currently lacks, and many industry analysts say Chrysler will be forced into bankruptcy protection if it can't complete the deal by the end of this month.

Clearly, much of the problem facing GM, Ford and Chrysler stems from the same problem: too much concentration on building the most popular vehicles of the day, seemingly oblivious of the fact that something as simple as skyrocketing fuel prices can change buying habits overnight.

But as usually is the case, locating the problem area and finding the best means of correcting it pose vastly different challenges.

As we see it, commitments by GM and Chrysler to produce more small, fuel-efficient vehicles and/or speed the introduction of more hybrids and plug-in electrics won't guarantee the firms' future viability, without which government bailouts will not be available.

Although many reasons lie behind the sharp decline in vehicle sales everywhere in North America, and particularly in the U.S. and Western Canada, one that has had little public attention is the fact that the tough battle for market share has been accompanied by huge improvements in vehicle quality. Long gone are the days when car owners faced engine overhauls once the vehicle had gone 50,000 miles and most cars were junked after five years' operation.

Two things we see as steps in the right direction would be job-sharing aimed at reducing layoffs and government incentives aimed at achieving more alliances between North American and foreign automakers.

For its part, the CAW could suggest that GM, Ford and Chrysler adopt four-day, 32-hour work weeks as a temporary standard, so that all the workers would get 80 per cent of their current wages and thousands more keep their jobs.

As for alliances, one could easily imagine the positive impact from GM and Hyundai agreeing that each would start assembling at least one of the other's cars at their own plants.

GM would see its sales soar in South Korea, while production of Hyundai vehicles at GM plants that are already shut down or scheduled to close would mean thousands fewer unemployed autoworkers.

As we see it, stakeholders' sharing in pains today would eventually lead to sharing in gains.

ONLY IN CANADA.



## Why not simply lease it?

INSTEAD OF WASTING taxpayers' dollars on a legal dispute as to whether Orangeville's representatives on Dufferin County council can vote on the proposed sale of the former CP Rail right-of-way north of Orangeville, the parties involved ought to look seriously at the alternative of a 99-year lease.

Long-term leases have often been used as a railway-building tool, and in this case would seem to offer some advantages and few, if any, disadvantages to both the County and the proposed purchaser, the Highland Rail Group.

The county's continued ownership of the right-of-way could assure its continued availability for recreational purposes, particularly on weekends when the rails would not normally be used to transport freight. It might also free up infrastructure money for the proposed northward extension of the tracks, which now end just east of Veterans Way. The only downside we can see for the County would be a need to substitute lease payments for a sale revenue.

As for Highland, the advantages might include less exposure to property taxes, which CP Rail cited as the main reason for abandoning the line between Orangeville and Owen Sound.

## CITIZEN MAILBOX

### 'Top Ten' problems with recent article

Here are the 'Top 10' shortcomings of a recent incomplete and misleading article about The Highland Companies ("Melancthon farmers taking stand on land use").

1. The reporter did not give us a chance to address most of the issues raised. She asked two very narrow and precise questions, one of which wasn't even mentioned in the story.

2. The article fails to note that the acquisition of land involved willing sellers exercising their right to dispose of their property as part of their personal or estate planning. In fact, a number of people approached the Company about selling their land, not the other way around.

3. The article ignores the fact that the next generation of family members continues to operate most of the acquired farm acreage. And millions of dollars have been invested in upgrading those operations.

4. It is our understanding that the Dufferin Potato Growers Association disbanded, in large part, because our critics wanted to use its funds to attack the Company instead of for other purposes.

5. There is considerable question and little evidence that

potatoes can be designated a specialty crop. The potatoes we grow are common varieties grown in other parts of Ontario and Canada. As well, the issue involves a number of matters that affect all landowners and their ability to make decisions about their property. It is our understanding that the Ontario Potato Board recently declined to support our critics' request to support the application for specialty crop designation. In addition, the Province has prioritized land uses in addition to agriculture, including renewable energy and aggregates.

6. Everyone knows that the area is rich in mineral aggregate resources. This fact has been acknowledged by area planners and the importance of the resource has been recognized by the provincial government.

7. The article ignores the fact that the Company has disclosed its plans in a number of ways and in a number of settings. We've said that we're studying activities in addition to, not in place of, our farming operation. We've said that, like others have done, we're looking at wind power and aggregates in Melancthon Township. And we've said that if we pursue

any of those activities, we will do so in an environmentally, socially and economically responsible way.

8. The article furthers the myth of "a big hole in the ground" covering thousands of acres at once. We've said that this would not be our intention if an application is filed. Progressive rehabilitation limits the size of any active extraction area, ensuring that agriculture would continue on the vast majority of the land. Progressive rehabilitation returns the land to other uses more quickly. And we've said we're looking at rehabilitation to agriculture, which research indicates is a viable option. The fact is that any aggregate project would impact a very small percentage of the existing farmland in Melancthon Township at any one time.

9. The article is misleading as to the reason the Company declined our critics' invitation to attend a meeting. The group asked that it be held in mid-March, less than 8 weeks after the previous public meeting. In an open letter the Company said it had little new information to add given that fact.

10. The article seems to accept our critics' claim that the

Company has harmed the community. In fact, and as our actions and announcements make clear, we are working hard to contribute to the community's well-being. At a time when other businesses are shutting down, cutting back and laying off, we have been investing in the area and its future. We are creating jobs and generating tax revenue for local services. In addition, we are the largest local private sector donor to community causes, organizations and events. We are also looking for other ways to help make life better for people, such as helping to recruit doctors and working to bring the YMCA to the area.

Michael Daniher  
Representative  
The Highland Companies

### Rail line trail needs funding, support

The day is getting closer to when our community will know the result of the negotiations between our elected representatives and a private company which has purchased large parcels of land in Melancthon and Mulmur and is now interested in purchasing the abandoned rail line that runs the length of Dufferin County. There are two points we would like to make regarding this matter.

Any deal to sell this rail corridor needs to include a provision, and funding, to create a recreational trail beside the rail line.

In 2006, Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) consulted broadly with our community and heard the keen interest in safeguarding and nurturing the economic, social and environmental well-being of our community. To achieve this, HCIA was asked to provide community leadership and action on six projects that were beyond the scope of any one organization or jurisdiction. The project that was identified as the highest priority - was to support the creation of a "Headwaters" community-wide multi-purpose trail system. In response, HCIA struck a Trails Working Group to work on this initiative. This working group convened more than 70 interested individuals and groups who collectively considered a number of options and prioritized five: the Island Lake trail, bike lanes on County roads, a trail south

### Something that really needs investigating

I was just reading the write-up by Dan Pelton in your March 26 issue, "UG board accused of hindering special needs kids."

This is a subject I would really like to see you follow-up on with future articles keeping the public informed on what is happening in this particular situation. To me, this is a human interest story that, although it may only affect a small minority of people, is something that really needs to be investigated.

It is a subject that concerns me because I do have several friends who have special needs children. I also have a daughter who is interested in becoming a teacher, and who has had the privilege of working with some of the special needs children through a co-op program, as well as growing up with one of her friends having a brother who was a special needs child. She is now considering specializing in this particular area of education.

While the school board may be denying the fact that the French immersion program is not the problem, it seems rather strange that after all these years

of helping these special needs children at Princess Elizabeth School, that they are just now in particular, being turned away from the program that has been helping them and making headway with their learning.

Why, when there are only three students, are they being separated? Isn't it better that these students remain in as familiar a place as possible and remain together?

If Credit Meadows also has a special program in place, then why aren't all three students being kept together and bused to the same school? Wouldn't it be more beneficial for these students to remain together, and at least have that familiarity with one another when they are being taken out of the class where they have been comfortable and learning with one another?

Your article also spoke a lot about the "excellent" program in Credit Meadows, but there wasn't anything at all about the program at Island Lake Public School where the third student is supposed to be sent to. Is there not a good program there? What is the situation there? Are these new programs that they

are being shoved into, suitable for the "needs, sex and ages" of these three students?

If Credit Meadows is offering such a great program, then why aren't they sending all three students together? That seems very strange to me.

How can the board say they are trying to make this transition as painless as possible, when they are taking these special needs students out of the environment they have been used to being in, as well as separating the students and shipping them off to different schools.

Will they still continue with the same program in each of these different schools or will they be thrown into a completely different situation that will again hinder their learning experiences and set them back from the levels they have now reached?

Quite frankly, if it was one of my children I would be very upset with these changes. I wonder how many other parents would also feel that way if it was one of their own children.

Donna Matheson  
Orangeville

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### As hard as nails

There was an interesting and, for me, reassuring in the extreme, interview on CBC Radio One, The Current, about the elves in Iceland. It seems that the elves are granted all but official recognition in Iceland as being both normally benevolent but malicious when their places are infringed upon by development.

Before planning buildings or roads, the Icelanders consult psychics who are friends of the elves to establish that they have no interest in the land under proposed development. To fail to do so is to incur the wrath of the elves who can be quite destructive. Lots of folk in Iceland lay claim to the elves as "Hidden People" whom they have met one way or another.

So, what was reassuring about that? Was I happy to learn that Iceland is full of crazy people who believe in elves? The answer is yes, I certainly was.

Another collection of interviews on the same CBC program the day after the story about the elves in Iceland had a couple of scientists emphatically propounding the old theories about hard evidence, mathematics and scientific proofs being the only admissible confirmations of any empiricism. Anything else is born of fantasy or a wandering of the mind. Everything seemingly mystical can be explained, they declared; rational explanations all round - just for the asking.

Those chaps skirted around religious beliefs and experiences, though, careful not to upset the tightly controlling regiment of the church, synagogue, temple, etc.

A few days later, closer to home, I heard a story from some of the staff at Theatre Orangeville about the ghost that walks the Town Hall/Opera House. There have been many sightings and, recently, a troupe of paranormal researchers came to the theatre to have a feel for the ghost.

Their visit was rewarded with "manifestations" and they went away declaring that the ghost is a lady. "Granny Newton" is the name the theatre staff gives to their apparition, she being a lady who lived in a house on the property before the town hall was built there.

In Ireland, it is absolutely accepted that there are faeries. In every land around this world, this evidence and belief in "hidden people", ghosts and all sorts of ethereal beings not wholly of this physical earth but entirely of this world is accepted.

As we come into Holy Week, where the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ dominates the concerns and interests of the Christian churches, we are once again flying in the face of scientific theories. We are asked to not only accept but also, indeed, to truly believe that a man died and, after three days of death, rose again to walk the earth and to appear at random to several of his followers.

As a matter of fact, the Roman historian, Tacitus, tells us that there were a number of incidents in those years of people being called back from the dead, as Jesus did Lazarus. There were reports at the time of a prophet in Palestine who was crucified and was later reputed to have been seen alive. Why should Tacitus be any less believable than the Globe and Mail?

Well, rationalists have been trying to explain Jesus away for centuries, while others have been desperately trying to use

scientific methods to confirm His story.

The whole issue of the truth of what exists that we cannot see has raged, been debated and worn out every theory and proof all through our existence as "rational" creatures, right down to the argument over whether we have that within us that cannot be shown - a soul.

And here is the truth as I see it: that which cannot be seen, our spiritual life, the mysticism of our nature is as real and as hard as nails. To fail to understand the vital existence of our "soul" (it's only a word: call it what you like) is to fail to understand any important thing about ourselves.

We prove this by longing for it, by going to church, maybe being disappointed and so seeking some other venue to satisfy that within us that cannot be seen, by going to "wellness centres" and getting in touch with our "chakras", by learning yoga for its spiritual aspects, by attending extraordinary religious institutions, with unusual names.

Whether one refuses to accept the existence at all of a soul, spiritual entities, even hidden people, or whether one believes but cannot find a community that fits one's needs, we are lost. Yet, it is much better to believe and wander than to deny.

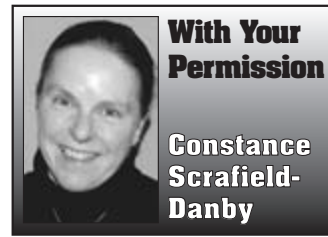
As we deteriorate as a species, as we destroy our planet and sink daily deeper into a general degradation; all the while that we agree wars must rage and it is acceptable for humanity to be divided into large groups of those who suffer incredible injustice, poverty-stricken conditions and horrible murder; middle sized groups of those who are dumped out of their jobs for no fault of their own and tiny clusters of those who live with ridiculous wealth born of the suffering and in spite of the injustices, we draw further and further away from that which is mystical, which is unseen, yet is the most important part of ourselves.

I am not a voice in the wilderness. Even the most hypocritical of our leaders have begun to pay lip service to the needs of this earth and its peoples. They have been bent by the constant hard work of heroes who have captured the public eye and call out for a stop to damage and reversals of horrors.

Perhaps, the only way to a true revolution is for the whole of humanity to find its soul, for the spiritual side of humanity to have the upper hand in our behaviour. Seeing as a primarily spiritual being, our current state of being would be impossible. It is only our physical perceptions that keep us bound to the worst of our nature.

Jesus died and lived a very long time ago, leaving His disciples the tremendous burden of a message to love and save and preserve. But over the centuries, the burden of proof has prevailed and His followers have largely failed.

That acknowledged, I wonder if the spiritual world around us will send yet another Messenger that will finally convince us to pull back from the brink before it is too late.



With Your Permission

Constance Scrafield-Danby