

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

Greyhound's move shows need for new Via role

LAST WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENT by Greyhound Canada that it plans to end local services in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario should serve as a wake-up call to federal politicians.

For reasons we've never understood and no doubt are not valid in today's circumstances, the politicians of the day established Via Rail Canada as a shadowy successor to the rail passenger services previously offered by our national railways.

In the knowledge that rail passenger services would seldom, if ever, be profitable beyond the busy Windsor-Montreal corridor, Via's management has systematically reduced or eliminated all other services and made absolutely no attempt to come up with innovative means of serving the rest of the country.

Meanwhile, Greyhound Canada went about securing a virtual monopoly of intercity bus service across Canada. Locally, it purchased both Gray Coach Lines (a subsidiary of the Toronto Transit Commission) and its lone competitor, Penetang Midland Coach Lines, raised fares rather spectacularly and reduced service to the point where today only one bus passes through Dufferin, leaving Owen Sound at 10:30 a.m. and arriving in downtown Toronto shortly after 2 p.m., then starting its return trip at about 6 p.m.

As for fares, the non-refundable "bargain" ticket costs \$21.75 to and from Orangeville and \$23.30 for an adult going to or from Shelburne.

In comparison, the current GO Transit fare between Orangeville and Toronto's Union Station is \$9.40 for adults and half that for students and seniors.

Assuming, reasonably, that the local

Greyhound fares are typical of those elsewhere in Canada, it's passing strange that after gobbling up all its competition, the Canadian subsidiary of Dallas-based Greyhound Lines Inc. now thinks it deserves multi-million-dollar subsidies in return for continuing to serve small-town Canada.

As we see it, the appropriate response of the federal government would be to give Via Rail essentially the same role the Ontario government gave GO Transit, a mandate to provide rail service in the Greater Toronto Area where it's warranted, complemented by bus service where it isn't.

It will surely strike many readers as little short of outrageous that if Greyhound carries out its plan, cities like Thunder Bay and Kenora, as well as the towns and villages between them, will have no intercity public transportation of any sort except by air.

If indeed we're to have another federal election this fall, it will be interesting to see whether any of the three national parties will include in their platforms a commitment to overhaul Via Rail, requiring it to provide, directly or indirectly, rail or bus transportation to every Canadian community that's either currently served by Greyhound (or another line) or once had rail passenger service.

With such a mandate, Via would be encouraged to examine the best means of providing such services. In this part of the country it would be fairly obvious that one option would be collaboration with GO Transit, so that places like Peterborough, Collingwood and Goderich that still have a railway close at hand would once more have the option of rail passenger service and smaller centres would have connecting bus services.

Obviously, cost would be a major consideration, and the new mandate for Via should stress the need for innovative means of providing good service at minimal cost.

In terms of service, Via should be encouraged to look at economical means of providing good service to smaller communities.

As we see it, the best option available would be self-propelled passenger coaches similar to the "dayliners" that once provided daily service between Toronto and Owen Sound and dozens of other CPR branch lines across the country and even today are used between Sudbury and White River and on Vancouver Island.

Although those rail diesel cars are now more than 50 years old, Bombardier is producing 21st-Century versions of them for European railways.

As for bus services, the most cost-effective means of providing them would undoubtedly be by having Via contract them out to independent operators, where possible having them connect with the revived rail passenger services.

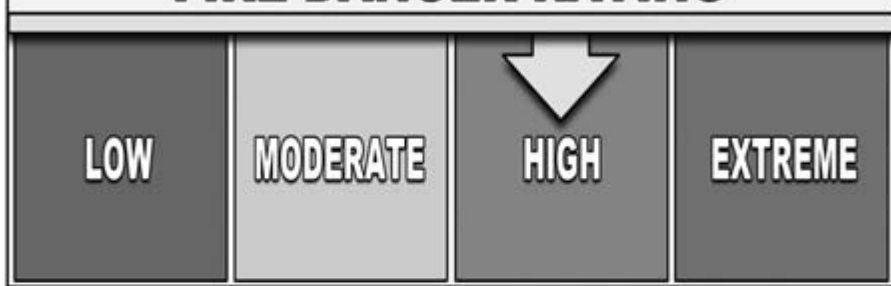
In the interim, it would be interesting to see what would happen if Via purchased a dozen or so refurbished dayliners to test the attractiveness of relatively high-speed rail service using them on existing tracks out of Orangeville, Goderich, Collingwood and Peterborough, as well as on the CP Rail main line that once carried passengers from Vancouver to Toronto and Montreal via Calgary, Regina and Thunder Bay, all of which no longer have rail passenger service.

Even then, the rail passenger service would be far short of that once offered Canadians and still available to Europeans.

FORESTRY WARNING



FIRE DANGER RATING



ELECTION WARNING

LIAR DANGER RATING



A \$6.2 million unnecessary expense?

IT WOULD APPEAR more than likely that Dufferin County's taxpayers will be billed at least \$6.2 million for an addition to a building that for decades has had a chronic shortage of public parking space.

As you'll be able to read elsewhere, \$6.2 million is the sum suggested in a Parkin Architects Ltd. design report as the cost of a two-storey addition plus basement at the west side of the existing county courthouse on Orangeville's Zina Street which is to house the Provincial Offences Act (POA) courts and some offices.

Among other reasons, the addition has been deemed necessary to satisfy the requirements of the Attorney General's ministry and to ensure that the county's provincial offence charges continue to be

heard in Orangeville.

But the proposed design and cost estimate are coming before county council at a time when at least two townships are questioning the efficiency of the Caledon-based POA administration's overhead. A July 15 Amaranth motion, supported last week by Melancton, is calling for an efficiency study.

As well, Councillor John Crowe noted that POA revenues are steadily declining.

Whether or not that's the case, it would surely be preferable for the County to issue a request for proposals for a new administration building in an area such as RioCan's Fairgrounds Shopping Centre that has more than ample parking space and could involve a leaseback instead of a new debenture.

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Two 'major threats' to our way of life

In the second half of the 20th century Ontario lost 49% of its farmland to development and today 53% of all vegetables consumed by people are imported. For every apple produced in Ontario five come from other countries. Should this continue into the future the wealth derived from food production will all be enjoyed by people other than those who labour 24/7 to produce food here.

The Places to Grow Act and the Highland, Melancton disaster-in-the-making are two of the major threats to a way of life chosen by the ratepayers of

Dufferin County and to the arable productive food producing soils of this section of Ontario.

The former threatens the farming community as productive farms are sold to developers intent on constructing new homes to sell to people prepared to accept the long commute to their places of employment rather than continue living in the City of Toronto where prices, congestion, crime and diminishing services are the result of a council lacking vision or ability.

Then there is the issue of the Highland group which has paid

big dollars to acquire the 2400 acres+ of rich farmland from farmers, many of whom have reached retirement age and need the biggest dollar possible for their land in order to ensure their retirement years.

Thus only the deep pockets win and the young farmers interested in the lifestyle and the production of food cannot afford the prices the land commands and make a living. The price the product brings and the cost of the land combined becomes a simple arithmetical negative and a losing proposition.

Now Melancton and the county face the possibility of losing that fertile soil to a quarrying operation for the limestone that lies beneath. A quarry expected to be 200 feet deep or more destroying the water table and aquifers in the process and ruining the lives of many people in proximity to this destructive money pit. In addition to the destruction of the aquifers and filtration provided by the limestone the fertile top soil will, in all probability, be sold because storage and protection of such huge volumes of soil will present a major headache, and a costly one too.

The idea that this will be an economic stimulus for Dufferin is not so; it might offer a few labouring jobs for the time it takes to extract most of the limestone but what will remain will be a huge hole in the ground that will never be returned to its pristine cultivating capability. Is the loss to the people of that community and the upheaval in a way of life

I read the article in the paper about the Olympic Torch celebrations. It is unfortunate that it did not mention the involvement of former Olympians. It might have helped with our search of these athletes.

However, the main thing that concerned me is the plan to release birds at some point in the ceremony. Birds that are acquired for this purpose are born and raised in captivity and do not learn to seek their own food or the natural fear of predators. The fate of these birds is inevitably death from starvation which is particularly likely due to lack of available food in the winter or at the hands of a predator.

I'm sure that I would not be alone in asking that the birds not be a part of our celebration. Virginia Ridpath via e-mail

really worth the destruction that is inevitable?

As oil becomes increasingly costly more and more we will become dependent on domestically produce foods. The cost of transporting food products from other countries will drive the prices to levels that will be beyond the reach of most people. It must be obvious to those who reason that oil, the life blood of all of today's societies, at one time \$3.00 per barrel and now hovering precariously around \$70.00 and with but one way to go, will inevitably change the manner in which we live today.

Our elected leaders must begin to think long-term and not in four year segments. Unless a revolutionary fuel is discovered our future is unalterable, we must secure our food producing soils or those who follow us will pay a heavy price and even see the unraveling of our social structure.

It is suggested that one way to preserve and protect our farmlands from exploitation by profiteers is to introduce a farmland insurance program into which farmers could pay a given premium which, upon retirement would provide sufficient income to the retiree to ensure comfort and security. Farmland should be identified and quantified and price controlled to ensure its continued use for food production and at a market price within the reach of young farmers. This would ensure that farm land would remain at a fair price and its food producing capacity maintained for future generations.

If we do nothing but continue to permit the exploitation of our fertile soils to those who only worship the buck we are doomed. Our fertile soils are not unlimited and here they halt at the foot of the Shield. Granite is an indigestible substance.

Ken Hayward
Mono

Melancton council doesn't favour huge quarry

I would like to congratulate Melancton Mayor Debbie Fawcett for having the courage to state that Council was "not in favour of a 2,400-acre quarry" at the Melancton Council meeting Sept. 3, 2009. She did this knowing Highland Company's representative lawyer Michael Daniher

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Pork industry in crisis

As a longtime hog farmer and livestock agent from Melancton Twp. for over 35 years I read with interest Doug Skeates article in the July 16th edition of the Free Press.

With hog farming in Canada in a crisis situation - Swine Flu, high costs, many producers are being forced to exit the business, many of them some of the best producers in Canada. The Canadian Government must step forward immediately and come to the aid of an vital industry or we will all be forced to exit it.

Regarding Mr. Skeates comments in his article: quote - 'Despite medical opinion that pork is unaffected by Swine

Flu the suspicion that meat is tainted hopefully will reduce consumption' and the comment about expensive food such as meat, pork at under 50 lb. dressed weight sure doesn't seem expensive to me.

Before some people print articles like this in the paper perhaps they should remember where their food came from. Pork is safe and always will be a safe meat. Myself, I have kept hogs nearly 40 years but will be exiting the business this fall.

Let's stand behind the Canadian farmer and get some action in Ottawa.

Garnet Hanna
2nd Line, Melancton

Forests and Northern Ontario

Doug Skeates' column of 3 September made some interesting observations.

Mr Skeates pondered why there are so few people living in northern Ontario. I wondered about that, too. Could it be that Mr McGuinty's "Places to Grow" Act does not impose increased population on the North? Why does the Act require a doubling of rural population in Dufferin County when towns like Atikokan and cities like North Bay are losing residents? Could we not reverse the trend? All Mr McGuinty has to do is pass another of his laws.

Mr Skeates noticed that northern lumber merchants clear-cut their leased woodlands, which in turn ruins the land and delays restoration of the forests. I suggest that, when land is leased instead of owned, it is exploited as thoroughly as possible without regard for the future. Large forests in the northwest

USA are carefully nourished because the lumber companies own them and wish to maintain a renewable stock of quality lumber for the future.

If ownership of woodland ensures good woodland stewardship, why does Dufferin County persist in hardening the rules for lumber harvesting on privately-owned rural properties? As it is in the long-term interest of landowners to nurture their trees and harvest them sustainably, and since landowners have been successfully doing so for well over a century, there is clearly no need for the county administration to control private woodlot management.

Both the Ontario and Dufferin County governments continue to pass laws that frustrate the work of conscientious farmers. No one can convince me that all legislation is logical.

Charles Hooker
Orangeville

This time, let's get it right!

The last time there was a federal election, last October, it was as a result of the spoiled brat, Stephen Harper's, calling it. This was in direct disobedience to his own law of imposing set dates for elections. He called the election because he wanted a majority government but it was a complete waste of \$300 million because he was returned with a minority government that was not much better than before.

I worked in one of the polling stations last year: 13 hours and they don't even give you coffee — I was so angry with Mr. S. Harper — he wasted the country's money, soured the poor Canadian public so that no one wanted to bother voting and blew away a whole day of mine for nothing!

However, this time, in October if that is the date, we have to go to the polls and we have to mean it.

Imagine the way Canadians abroad have been treated — one held at bay and even put in prison in Kenya because her lips did not appear to match her passport picture; imagine the diminishment of our reputation abroad as the only western country that has not brought its one inmate of Guantanamo Bay home; just picture that Canadian officials have lied about and maligned our own citizens, who have been imprisoned and tortured in jails overseas.

Our environmental policies are in tatters; our foreign policies are increasingly a source of embarrassment; our Prime Minister is in the habit of sneaking unsavoury laws on the country and thunders abuse at the Senate when they object.

Through all this, the Liberals have tried to steer their own ship in stormy waters, agreeing impossibly to so many offenses, suffering the mockery of the Conservatives, while endeavouring not to send the country back to the polls even sooner than October.

Last year, there was a brave attempt at mutiny when the whole of Parliament banded together to form a coalition.

Whether or not you agree that the coalition made sense, members of Parliament were right to call the Prime Minister to account for himself. Which he did not; once again he bullied — this time, the Governor General — and shut the country down.

In other words, no one that we voted for was permitted to work or attend Parliament or perform any of their duties as duly elected MPs during those months of prorogation.

Michael Ignatieff must be given his due. No doubt, he was sitting in his cushy job in the U.S., looking at matters in Canada. As they grew worse, he must have thought, "I ought to go home and see if I can help."

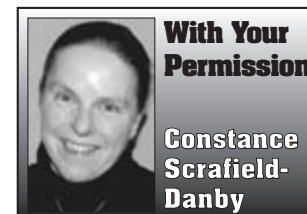
He came back to Canada, arrogantly, to be sure, to apply for the job of Prime Minister because the incompetence of those who are in the queue for the job worried him.

He has not exactly worked his way up through the ranks, but there is an element of urgency involved here. He did not have time to be engaged as a backbencher, edging his way forward. He needed to come forward as quickly as possible.

Mr. Ignatieff has struggled with the crisis that is the Harper government for the last year. Mr. Harper has dragged him and his party through the mud behind him. Mr. Ignatieff has endured months of embarrassment helping to pass motions he hated in order to avoid yet another election before he and the Liberals were ready to go to the people.

There was no point in forcing an election — which Mr. Harper would have been delighted to fight — when the Liberal party was in such a shambles. From all appearances, though, it seems that the Liberal party is finally getting itself in order, steady under a solid leadership.

Michael Ignatieff made a very good representation of that leadership in his own person and the reasons why the Canadian voter



With Your Permission
Constance Scrafield-Danby

should place his faith in the Liberals at his recent press conference, when he stated his intention to no longer support the government.

So far, Stephen Harper clearly feels he has nothing to fear from the Liberals, for he is not doing deals with the NDP. Jack Layton whose NDP members are suddenly waffling about their image, even to discussions about changing the name of the party, claims that "we have heard this all before from the Liberals". He is right about that, of course, but there would be nothing left of the Liberal Party's credibility if they were to back down this time.

The NDP made inroads in the last election but it is unlikely they would do this time, which worries Mr. Layton. So, he is trying to convince Mr. Harper to deal with him, but, ever arrogant, the Prime Minister will not be making concessions at this point, leaving Mr. Layton with the decision of with whom to throw his lot when the crunch comes.

But there would be nothing left of the New Democratic Party's credibility if they were to back away from defeating the government this time.

Stephen Harper has been leading this country down the wrong tracks for the whole of his terms in office. But he has lied to us, gone behind our backs, and manipulated his opponents, and thus, has held tenuously on to power.

This country needs an election where the opposition to Stephen Harper is strong and clear. We need an election to oust him in favour of a leadership that will put Canada back on track as the caring, brave and exemplary country that it once was.

Michael Ignatieff has spent many years living outside of the country. He now admits he was misguided about the war launched by the USA on Iraq which he supported at the time.

He is the best leader that we have now and we should throw our collective weight behind him and the Liberals, when he finally calls Stephen Harper to account.