



THOMAS M. CLARIDGE
 President
 ALAN M. CLARIDGE
 General Manager

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

Why on earth should we kill the gun registry now?

WE WONDER WHAT was in the minds of the eight Liberal and 12 New Democrat MPs who joined with the Conservatives in supporting a private member's bill designed to kill Canada's controversial long gun registry.

The support by the eight Liberal MPs is particularly perplexing, and seems to demonstrate anew a lack of strong leadership by leader Michael Ignatieff.

After all, the registry was the product of a Liberal government that acted in response to perceived public support for more gun control measures, and the basis for the most credible opposition to the registry — its enormous initial cost — is now water under the bridge.

Today, the only benefit to be derived from the registry's demise would be fulfillment of the Conservatives' pledge to the potent gun lobby.

Interestingly, the "free" Commons vote (truly free only for the opposition MPs) came while the government had, but had not released, quarterly figures from the RCMP showing not just increased police use of the registry, but increased civilian use, with 7.46 million firearms registered by the end of September, up 100,000 from the 7.36 million at the end of last year. Of that total, 6.7 million were non-restricted long guns, such as rifles and shotguns, up from 6.6 million at the end of last year.

The government also withheld until after the vote the Commissioner of Firearms 2008 report. Required by law, the report comes at a time when polls indicate that public support for the registry remained strong only in Quebec.

A largely positive review of the gun-control program, the 2008 report confirmed a trend toward increased police use of the gun registry database. But

the 2009 numbers are even more pronounced and, the RCMP suggests, indicate a growing confidence in the database.

In 2003, police officers accessed the online firearms registry an average of 1,811 times a day. By this September 30, the average-daily-use figure had soared to 10,818.

The RCMP's quarterly numbers indicated that police check the database for a full range of information about gun owners. Of the more than 10,000 daily queries, the average number directly related to the guns registered (the serial number or registration certificate) was only 296 or 2.7 per cent.

In the circumstances, we're left wondering what valid reason Prime Minister Stephen Harper's law-and-order Conservatives have to kill off the registry, beyond pandering to their rural constituencies.

Granted, critics of the registry have raised a lot of good points. There's not a shadow of doubt that far too much bureaucracy was involved in its creation or that the government of the day did an incredibly poor job of selling its potential benefits to the millions of law-abiding owners of rifles and shotguns.

Nor is there any doubt that the fees set for registering the firearms were far too high or that there was no need to require renewals of firearms acquisition permits. The only appropriate fee would be for information requiring a change in the registry beyond the owner's address, such as a new purchase or sale.

Clearly, one benefit of any registry lies in its ability to deal with losses or thefts. And there's surely little doubt that criminals like to steal firearms.

As well, a comprehensive firearms registry can be a useful tool for police

who all too often find themselves dealing with potentially violent domestic disputes.

Undoubtedly, police ought to have the right to seize firearms possessed by a party to a domestic dispute. And with a comprehensive, up-to-date gun registry it would take only a few seconds for the investigating officer to determine whether a firearm was registered.

Undoubtedly, critics of the registry had good reason to portray it as having been "a billion-dollar-boondoggle," since it did cost more than \$1 billion to set it up, rather than the relative pitance required by simply having user-friendly registration forms online or in the local Canadian Tire store.

However, the RCMP says the registries for both handguns and long guns cost just \$8.4 million to operate last year — about 25 cents per Canadian.

We never expected to see criminals registering their firearms, and we doubt that such an expectation existed in the minds of the registry's designers. However, it's also true that the registry's existence makes it possible for criminals found in possession of firearms to face additional sanctions, particularly if the weapon is either unregistered or the registry shows it to have been stolen.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police still strongly supports the registry, arguing that Canada's 2 million gun owners need to be accountable for their 7 million firearms.

Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair credits registration with helping his force recently uncover a cache of 58 unregistered firearms, and calls the cost of the long-gun registry "money well spent," making life a bit safer for his officers.

Simply put, why should we have to register our births, deaths and motor vehicles, but not firearms?

MANY PEOPLE ARE SPECULATING, WONDERING AND WORRYING ABOUT A CRYPTIC REFERENCE TO A POSSIBLE MAYAN PROPHECY THAT MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH AN ASTROLOGICAL, ASTRONOMICAL, OR GEOLOGICAL APOCALYPTIC SOMETHING OR OTHER IN DECEMBER OF 2012.

AS FOR THE VERY REAL, IMMINENT AND PREVENTABLE THREAT FROM GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE...



www.cartoonink.com

The next challenge: avoiding lineups

THE GOOD NEWS is that Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health says it's now offering offering H1N1 flu vaccine to all 250,000 residents of the two counties.

Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health, says expansion of the vaccinations was made possible by delivery last week of 22,000 more doses of H1N1 vaccine. "With this vaccine supply we are now able to provide H1N1 flu shots to all residents who want it."

Unfortunately, she didn't go on to explain how the health unit planned to make 22,000 doses supply a potential demand at least 10 times that great.

The health unit describes the "local roll-out" of the vaccine as "ahead of provincial plans," but the roll-out also seems to be in the absence of a credible means of avoiding long lineups at the public clinics by matching supply and demand.

In its press release announcing the expansion, the health unit said it "does not change the current promotion of flu shots to elementary school

students or plans for secondary school clinics the week of November 26. Parents can have their shot when they bring their children to a clinic, and secondary school staff can get shots at planned school clinics."

Well, despite the announcement, signs at the Orangeville clinic this week suggested shots were still available only to high-priority groups such as young children and those with chronic conditions.

A check of the health unit's website Wednesday confirmed that clinics are planned next week at Dufferin's three high schools: Orangeville District Secondary on Monday, Centre Dufferin District High on Tuesday, and Westside Secondary on Wednesday (in all cases, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.). But elementary school kids and their parents apparently must go with everyone else to the public clinics, with none currently planned in Dufferin apart from the one at 276A Broadway in Orangeville.

What is this? Planned chaos?

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Why I get the flu shot and the H1N1 Vaccine

Wintertime coughs, colds and flu are as Canadian as Tim Hortons and frigid Saturday mornings at the hockey rink. The fever, cough, and sore muscles that we all have experienced, is caused by an influenza virus and although it seems to be little more than a nuisance for healthy adults, it actually represents significantly more.

Most individuals are frequently exposed to influenza, especially during the winter months. With each exposure there is a 25% chance of getting infected. Receiving the annual flu shot reduces that chance to 5%.

As a physician, I will be

exposed much more than the average person. I could spread a virus to my own family and potentially hundreds of coworkers and patients before the first pang of muscle ache even tells me I have the virus.

Getting the flu shot is a personal choice. But, by receiving vaccines I am not only protecting myself, I am also protecting my family and coworkers.

Any treatment has potential side effects and the flu shot is no different. For most, this represents a 5% risk of experiencing a mild reaction for up to 24 hours; a reaction characterized by muscle aches and low grade fever.

For an extremely small per-

centage of individuals, there exists a very rare chance of contracting a serious neurological disease called Guillain Barre Syndrome, but this risk is far less than that of dying from a severe case of influenza.

The H1N1 influenza virus (a.k.a. - swine flu), which is currently circulating in our communities at a low level, has caused serious and life threatening illness in certain groups of people: pregnant women, infants, teens and the sick. A vaccine for this virus, one that is different from the regular flu virus, is available.

As my teens will be at risk for more severe illness, I will certainly take the H1N1 vac-

cine and encourage them to do as well.

Finally a bit of myth busting: You simply cannot get the flu from the flu shot. You can get achy muscles and a short lived fever, but you are not infected nor can you infect other people.

Sickness and work or school absenteeism from influenza symptoms is greater than side effects from the flu shot

I encourage you to protect yourself and consider getting your flu and H1N1 vaccines this year.

Dr. Jeff McKinnon
 Chief of Staff
 Headwaters
 Health Care Centre

Writer asks, what are the "Deniers" denying?

There is a growing anxiety amongst the supporters of a climate change treaty that the "deniers" are exerting an undue influence over the Copenhagen negotiations and are sowing the seeds of confusion and doubt in the minds of the general public.

But what are the deniers denying? Basically, the deniers are denying four things:

1. They are denying that CO2 is the primary cause of climate change. They do not doubt that climate change is occurring, it always has and always will and it is nature's response to a complex array of conditions. While emitting CO2 in ever-growing volumes is not a desirable thing, reducing these emissions, even dramatically, will not unduly influence climate.

2. The deniers deny that there is a consensus within climate science that man is the

primary cause of global warming. There are many areas of dispute amongst the scientific community with respect to climate, including explanations for changes in Arctic and Antarctic ice, the role of the sun in determining climate and the validity and robustness of computer models of climate change. As Einstein noted, it takes a single set of observations linked to an alternative theory to trigger a shift in thinking in science. The theory that humans are the primary cause of climate change is not, like Newtonian laws of mechanics, a closed theory - it is still open to question.

3. The deniers deny that many of the events attributed to climate change - the melting of the ice on Mount Kilimanjaro, hurricanes, the spread of malaria in Africa and so on - are connected to climate change. For

each of these events there are other, more plausible explanations. For example, the melting of the ice cap on Kilimanjaro is strongly linked to deforestation of the area in close proximity to the mountain, which results in a lowering of moisture levels which impact ice formation.

4. Finally, the deniers deny that taxing carbon and developing carbon markets will have an impact on the climate. Indeed, the economists who are deniers are skeptical about the economics of many green "solutions" - wind farms, solar farms, cap and trade, carbon taxes and emissions control. They do not deny that reducing CO2 emissions may be desirable for other reasons - air quality being the most important. But they are not convinced that all of these investments will produce the return expected - a cooler planet.

To support their denials, deniers use peer reviewed scientific papers which call into question the currently dominant scientific view and comprehensive economic analysis. There are many such papers by experts in climatology, including some who are or have been part of the scientific team used by the UN to create the technical documents which are said to inform the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. They also make extensive use of observational data and measurements of temperature, ocean level, emissions and so on. They do not put their faith in computer models, which in any case produce contradictory findings: rather they rely heavily on direct measures.

Because the deniers have been very vociferous, they have

also come under attack. The attacks take three basic forms. The first is to question the scientific credentials of those who deny the man-made global warming thesis. The same standards are not applied to the IPCC itself or to many "warmists" - the head of the IPCC (a former railway engineer), David Suzuki and Al Gore, for example, have no qualifications in climatology. Second, there is the standard accusation that deniers are funded by big oil or the coal industry. This ignores the funding granted to the "warmists", which runs into billions, by interest groups and governments which should not be regarded as neutral sources of funds. The final accusation is that they ignore the human suffering their denials may cause. This is not at all the case - the primary action plan suggested by the deniers is that we should focus our actions on adaptation and technologies to combat warming, cooling and the other effects of the natural cycle of climate change.

Skepticism is healthy and necessary condition of science. It is also a necessary condition of public policy development. Trying to weigh evidence and make decisions is tough, but the warmists refuse to debate with the deniers and the policy makers have their minds set on a course of action, despite growing evidence that it will make little difference to the climate over time.

As we get near to the December meeting of world governments in Copenhagen, now less than four weeks away,

• Please turn to page A4

Filling in the missing link

Trails are back in the news this week, with the release of a draft Dufferin "Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan," which will be on display this Saturday at Shelburne's Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex and on Saturday, November 28, at the Alder Street Recreation Centre in Orangeville.

Although the plan focuses primarily on non-motorized routes on County-owned lands and roads, it apparently also builds on work by Headwaters Communities in Action's Trails Working Group and the existing trails plans in Dufferin's local municipalities.

Of all the planned trails, perhaps the most interesting and challenging are those already in existence and planned in the vicinity of Island Lake.

At present, there are fully accessible trails along the lake's south and north shore, last summer's major project being the completion of a high-quality trail across the north dam and along the shoreline as far east as a planned crossing to the south shore that will require construction of two bridges.

Although the north-shore trail can be reached from the Hockley Road via an excellent trail and boardwalk opened two years ago, it isn't getting a lot of use, and probably won't until there is similarly easy access from Orangeville's existing trail system.

Unfortunately, maps of the planned Island Lake perimeter trail suggest that providing the "missing link" between the north trail and the town trail that follows the Highway 10 bypass will be awfully expensive, involving some form of crossing of a substantial bay.

But there is a possible alternative that would be a lot less costly and could see Orangeville residents able to park in the huge Fairgrounds Shopping Centre lot and hike fairly directly to the north shore trail.

The possibility lies in the existence of a long-abandoned, yet clearly marked trail through a piece of relatively primeval forest and the potential of a temporary grass trail across lands held by a local developer that apparently has no immediate plan for a subdivision.

The forest trail can be reached by heading west to the end of the lake's north dam, built to prevent the lake from emptying into the Nottawasaga River.

A recent visit to the trail provided a real shock, in the discovery of a beautiful new, but unpended, picnic table which I later discovered had disappeared after Mono had installed it as a feature for the new north trail.

The discovery came in a conversation with Mono councillor Bob Shirley, who before returning to Mono council early this year had long been involved in the trails project as the town's representative on the Credit Valley Conservation authority.

Surprisingly, Bob wasn't aware of the forest trail, which boasts clear red markings, evidence of significant tree removal and an earthen floor that has been complicated by the gradual emergence (thanks to frost?) of boul-

ders deposited by a retreating glacier.

Nor was he certain as to the forest's ownership, although he speculated that it might be part of the holdings of Mono Developments Ltd., the local developer.

Although the trail was obviously created years ago by some local hiking enthusiasts, and may have followed a predecessor route to the new north-south trail from Hockley Road, it clearly hasn't been maintained in recent

years. Recent wind storms have led to several trees impeding hikers' passage. Whatever the case, it's highly unlikely the forest itself will ever become part of a residential subdivision, and it wouldn't take a rocket scientist to conclude that even if it's in private hands it should be part of a parks reserve.

In the circumstances, it should be possible to provide the gravel needed to make the forest trail virtually accessible at minimal cost.

Although that would merely take hikers out to meadowlands that will one day be turned into a subdivision, it should be possible to provide a temporary grass trail between the forest and Forest Lawn.

In fact, there already is an impressive network of grass trails on the Mono Developments property that are quietly maintained by local residents who occasionally mow the grass.

Can a grass trail be considered "accessible"? I suppose it depends on several factors beyond the applicable definition. Perhaps the best test would be whether such trails can be used safely by power wheelchairs.

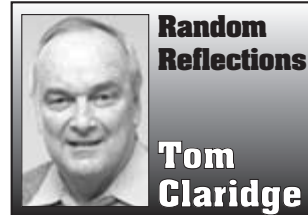
Whatever the case, the option is surely one that ought to be explored by the various parties that could become involved.

Another option that's worthy of consideration is the provision of an alternative to the direct route from the north dam to Forest Lawn (or more accurately the signalized intersection at Highway 10 that would provide access to the nearby town trail).

The alternative "loop" would use a surviving portion of the ancient Credit Valley Railway spur line that went from the CVR station near Broadway and Fourth Street to a quarry north of Hockley Road and west of Hurontario Street.

Unlike the forest trail, the old railbed has been fairly well maintained, probably by CVC staff, and provides access to another grassy trail that roughly follows the western shore of Island Lake.

In an era when the cost of new trails tends to be measured in hundreds of thousands of dollars, a combination of good will and enterprise on the part of the various stakeholders could seemingly provide a low-cost means of accessing the existing Island Lake trails.



Random Reflections

Tom Claridge