

# ORONO

## Weekly Times

Subscriptions \$29.91 + \$2.09 GST = \$32.00 per year.  
Publications Mail Registration No. 09301 • Agreement No. 40012366  
Publishing 48 issues annually at the office of publication.

"We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) toward our mailing costs."

Orono Weekly Times

5310 Main Street, P.O. Box 209, Orono, Ontario L0B 1M0  
Email: oronotimes@speedline.ca • Phone/Fax 905-983-5301

Publisher/Editor Margaret Zwart

The Orono Weekly Times welcomes letters to the editor on subjects of interest to our readers. Opinions expressed to the editor and articles are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Orono Weekly times. Letters must be signed and contain the address and phone number of the writer. Any letter considered unsuitable will not be acknowledged or returned. We reserve the right to edit for length, libel and slander. If your retail or classified ad appears for the first time, please check carefully. Notice of an error must be given before the next issue goes to print. The Orono Weekly Times will not be responsible for the loss or damage of such items.

## Christmas in the village

While the Orono Community Focus Group is on a vision quest, the Business Improvement Association (BIA) is working on a Christmas Lighting event that is bound to put Orono on the map. The annual Lighting of the Lights will take place in the village on November 28th this year.

Beside the carol singing by area school children, Brownies and Scouts, the appearance of Santa Claus and wagon rides through the village, the BIA is planning a Christmas Wreath competition. Stores on the Main Street will be encouraged to have their wreath on display so the public can vote for their favourite entry. The competition is open to residents as well who will be asked to have their wreath at the Orono Town Hall a day or two before the 28th. Categories for wreath entries are: Committee or Community Group, Resident and Junior which is 13 years of age and under. The winning wreath will be selected by a panel of judges. A 'People's Choice Award' will also be selected from the entries at the town hall. (Unlike the Chili Cook-off, any burnt entries will be disqualified.)

There are efforts underway to put up additional lights in the downtown core this year. Christmas lights have been donated by Raymond Minard for the Town Hall and downtown businesses. Store owners will be given lights to put in their windows to ensure a great light show for Orono's Lighting of the Lights on November the 28th. Christmas trees adorned with lights will also line both sides of Main Street as besides our traditional Christmas street lights decorations.

Orono should be about the brightest spot on the planet that night. Plan to be there.



## Viewpoint

by Alex Shepherd, MP Durham

### Senate reform

Most people scratch their heads in wonder when they see the behaviour of MPs during question period. We appear to be acting as immature children trying to get attention.

The House of Commons definitely needs to be reformed but, ironically, reform is not about the rules or the structure of committees - the tools of the place if you will - but rather how the MPs use the rules.

Firstly, in order to get their legislative agenda through the House the governing party has resorted to forcing the hands of committee members. It is not uncommon for contentious legislation to see long-term standing members of a committee suddenly replaced with members who are more compliant.

In the final analysis this only serves to send a message to parliamentarians that their opinions can be overridden.

Question period is a charade. All one has to do is read the morning newspapers to

determine what the majority of questions will be. While opposition parties are given substantial sums to do research it is totally unclear to me what they do with this money.

In reality it is the media asking the questions. And the media is largely responsible for the charade that is question period. If you want your 15-second sound bite you better say something totally absurd. The media enjoy focusing on conflict.

There is no time for thoughtful insightful reporting, it's just sport and entertainment which one can liken to the Romans watching the lions eat the Christians.

So then what is the solution? My suggestion to Paul Martin is we should reduce question period to three per week instead of every day.

I know right away some will suggest I am trying to protect the government from having to be accountable but I can assure you this is not the case.

Britain does not have ques-

SHEPHERD continued page 5



...THE IRONY IS STAGGERING



## Staying in Touch

MPP John O'Toole

### A word on the deficit

No new incoming government in history has ever patted their predecessors on the back and said they did a great job. For example, Premier McGuinty made no mention of the fact that we lowered taxes, stimulated the economy, and helped create over one million net new jobs in Ontario.

However it would be nice to see Ontario's finances viewed in context and in perspective.

MPP Gerry Phillips, now Chair of the Management Board, was speaking of a \$5 billion risk in the budget as early as June. He is quoted to this effect in Hansard on June 4, 2003. In other words, the Liberals knew the state of

Ontario's finances and the impacts of SARS, mad cow disease, and the power black-out. But that didn't stop them from promising billions of dollars in election goodies while they were on the campaign trail.

The fact of the matter is that our government would have made sales, found the savings, lobbied Ottawa for the funds Ontario is owed and generally made the tough decisions necessary to balance the budget. Why can't Dalton McGuinty? Or is this just an excuse to start raising taxes?

For the record, Ontario's Liberals stated in their election platform that the cap on Hydro rates would not be removed until the year 2006. The words they used were:

"We will keep the price cap in place until 2006. We do not believe that you should pay the price for the government's mistakes." Instead of keeping this commitment, Premier McGuinty broke his first major election promise and announced plans to raise our hydro rates. If the McGuinty government strategy is to raise taxes and blame somebody else, the next four years in Ontario will seem very long indeed.

A billion dollars is how much money the federal government still owes Ontario in disaster relief funds resulting from the SARS outbreak. And that doesn't include other federal commitments in areas such as health care. Why would our new premier not appeal to his federal Liberal cousins for fair treatment on behalf of Ontario?

Bringing back higher electricity prices will be disastrous for seniors on fixed incomes, families on tight budgets and small business. You may rest assured that I will continue to fight for fair electricity rates.