



Viewpoint

by Alex Shepherd, MP Durham

Pop culture creating disengaged generation

As adults we have got to work a little harder at getting our priorities straight and think of the impact our failure to do so is having on our young people.

Between Justin Timberlake ripping Janet Jackson's top off, exposing her breast, as the MTV culture spills over on to mainstream television, to the kind of programming that produces shows like the OC on prime-time, which from what I've seen, actively promotes the wrong kind sex education, it isn't any wonder that our kids have absolutely no idea of who they really are and what life is all about.

Walk through a mall, turn on the T.V., or watch a beer commercial on a Saturday night hockey game, our young people are being sold a bill of goods that doesn't have their best interests in mind but only the profit corporations make from the sale of fantasy.

The other day I heard a well known soup company's commercial on a radio station. The mother is giggling and laughing after eating the brownies her child brought home from school.

Once you hear the commercial only the village idiot wouldn't conclude that the brownies were baked using cannabis as an ingredient. What's this got to do with soup? It doesn't reflect the

lifestyle of any young mothers I know either.

These messages are leaving society with huge problems and a mess that needs to be cleaned up but no one really has the tools to get the job done.

Police try, teachers try, chambers of commerce and business improvement associations try, social services try, but there always seem to be road blocks.

Take a look at politics and public policy. It's another example of our failure to make the point of what's important.

Political pundits are always pointing out that voter turnout is way down. The fact is it's only down among young people.

The 2000 federal election saw only 61 percent of those eligible to vote exercise their right, and I would say responsibility, to vote. This is the lowest voter turnout since Confederation.

Closer examination however shows that people born before 1945 and those born between 1945 and 1959 still come out to vote in the numbers they always did.

The problem of voter turnout is confined to those between the ages of 18 and 41. And of those between the ages of 18 to 24 less than 25 percent took the time to vote.

I don't think we can simply say, "Well, young people never voted." Studies show a 19-year-old eligible voter today is less likely to vote than their mother or father was when they were the same age.

As this group continues to age the worry for our society is will they continue not

to vote. If they don't vote this can only create what I call a disengaged generation.

Some social scientists have concluded that young people vote less because they know less and care less about their society, its problems and its politics. In other words, if the youngest generation's interest and knowledge had been equal to the older generations, their voter turnout rate would be much higher.

I'm not saying to ban television, I don't believe locking up our sons and daughters is the answer and I wouldn't advocate prohibition.

I'm not stupid. Television has been around for three generations. And popular culture is all part of what makes any society vibrant, knowledgeable and interesting. Popular culture moves us forward.

However, as a society we have lost sight of what is reality and what is fantasy. Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake are sad examples of what young people should be striving for.

And we as adults, the supposedly engaged generations, are sad examples of what it is we are willing to tolerate in the name of democratic rights, right and wrong, and what should be important to the generation.

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Plan to relocate radioactive waste

A proposal to relocate the radio active waste at Port Granby, has that community's residents dismayed. The South East Clarington Rate Payer's Association, and the Port Granby Project Community Advisory Committee are in favour of keeping the low level radio active waste, at it's current location, on the north shores of Lake Ontario in an engineered containment facility. It was this plan, arrived at with advice from technical engineers, that Clarington Council adopted in 1999.

Equipped with this long term waste management solution, Clarington entered into a legal agreement with the Federal Government who have taken responsibility for long term storage of contaminated waste.

The proposed construction at the Port Granby Waste Management Facility would be subject to the multi-step, licensing process of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and therefore subject to an environmental assessment (EA). As part of the EA process the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office have to consider alternative means to long term waste management solution. They considered three proposals, the previously arrived at option of leaving the waste on site in a containment facility, the second similar to the first with the addition of removing some waste from a gorge on the site which is leaching into

the lake and some bluff stabilization. The third option they considered is to move all the waste to another site north of Lakeshore Road. It is this third option that is being promoted by the Management Office.

Mr. Glen Case, Director of the office made his group's position known to councillors in a presentation at Monday's General Purpose and Administration Committee meeting.

Mr. Sarwan Sahota of the South East Clarington Rate Payers Association who attended Monday's meeting and heard Case's presentation, told an Orono Times reporter after the meeting that his organization is opposed to any plan that would involve moving the contaminants. "Moving the waste is an unsafe procedure," he stated. "There are health and safety issues related to dispersal of toxins." There is no scientific study which has conclusively determined the above ground concept with the waste put onto a plastic liner then capped is safe, says Sahota. "The liner is prone to puncture which would result in leakage of waste," he stated.

The Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office will be providing opportunity for public input on their proposed solution in a series of open houses - March 31- Orono, April 6 - Newcastle and April 7 in Newtonville.

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