

Queen's Park Page experience is eye-opening for local boy

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

A Centennial Middle School student got a close-up view of the day-to-day operations of the Ontario government during his recent month-long stint as a page at Queen's Park.

Jeffery Howson, 13, of Georgetown was in one of three groups of 20 Grade 8 students who delivered messages and fetched water for Members of Provincial Parliament over a four-week period just before Christmas.

Howson was stationed in the House, performing his duties through Question

Period, routine proceedings and Orders of the Day.

"Just to be able to experience being so close to where they're making laws and doing the other business of the province was a great learning experience," said Howson, whose mother Andrea served as a page on Parliament Hill in Ottawa in her Grade 12 year.

Several hundred Grades 7-8 students applied for the page position and were required to write a 750-word essay on why they'd be a good candidate. Once selected, Howson said the first day of orientation was a little overwhelming as the pages were told they'd have to memorize the names



JEFFERY HOWSON

"We also had to know where everyone's offices were in the building, so I'm quite familiar with the inside of Queen's Park now."

of all 107 MPPs, their ridings and political party affiliations, as well as extensive instruction in proper etiquette in the House.

"We were told to never run, but walk swiftly and never make it seem that you're rushed," he added.

Howson was given homework by his Centennial teachers and the page program has a teacher on-site who conducted math and other subject lessons so the students wouldn't fall behind in their studies.

He stayed with a family friend in Toronto and took the subway to Queen's Park each day, which began with a briefing for all pages at 8 a.m. Howson also had lunch with Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnot one day and by the end of his assignment was a keen observer of the goings-on in the Legislative Building.

"I'm not sure what I want to do yet, but after this experience, I'm a little more inclined to follow a career in politics."

Mail delivery delays were a 'nuisance' say affected local residents

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"That was really the most irritating factor— not having any information regarding when regular service might resume long after other public and private sector services had returned to normal," said Taylor.

Heslop Cr. resident Joan Brown said she was without mail delivery for more than three weeks.

She said it didn't affect her greatly, "other than the nuisance factor."

"I was really surprised that's how management decided to handle it," said Brown.

Noble Cr. resident Alice Brand said they didn't have mail delivery for more than two weeks. She said when they went to the post office they were told their letter carrier was on leave and that their mail hadn't been sorted.

"I think there are obviously problems in the post office," said Brand. "It's evident they're just not doing their jobs."

Canada Post Media Relations Manager Carley Smith said, "Canada Post has experienced some delivery delays on a few routes over the past couple of weeks due to extreme weather conditions, absenteeism and challenges in hiring relief staff.

She said the mail route of the residents was covered by a relief carrier between Dec. 27 and Jan. 3.

"The carrier concentrated on parcels and signature items over Boxing Day week and mail was delivered every other day during that period. All Georgetown routes have been fully operational and fully staffed since last Wednesday," said Smith.

A statement posted to the Crown corporation's website Jan. 10 said that when mail delivery is affected by extreme weather conditions, such as December's ice storm, Canada Post will notify local

media, as well as post notices to its website and Twitter account.

The alert system is currently being used in Newfoundland and Labrador, where weather is making deliveries difficult in some areas, said Hamilton.

The alerts to the media will follow a two-tiered system. The statement said a Red Alert will be used to indicate that no delivery will be made that day due to the weather, while a Yellow Alert will mean that delivery is being attempted, but some addresses on the route may still go without mail.

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