

CENTENNIAL STUDENT ENJOYS BUSY SCHEDULE AS LEGISLATIVE PAGE

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Navigating public transit on her way to downtown Toronto every morning was one thing for 13-year-old Siya Aggarwal. The bigger challenge awaited once she arrived at Queen's Park.

There, as a legislative page, Aggarwal had to know all 124 Ontario MPPs. If someone wanted documents delivered to Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, she would have to know what he looked like and where he sat in the legislature.

Aggarwal developed a system to keep all the names straight. Her brother tested her using flash cards and she had nicknames for some of MPPs to help remember their names.

"As long as you're studying them every day, you'll

be fine," she said.

And if a name escaped her, there was always the seating plan behind the desks the pages could refer to, though "if they see you going there too many times," Aggarwal said, "they'll know you didn't study."

There were also a lot of rules to learn - no walking between the Speaker and the mace; no walking while a vote is taking place.

But for all she had to learn in a short amount of time, the Grade 8 Centennial Middle School student thoroughly enjoyed her three weeks as a page.

"All of us quickly became friends," Aggarwal said.

Aggarwal met another page from Brampton during orientation and the two of them travelled to Toronto together on the GO train each morning.

"It has helped a lot with

her independence and her confidence," said her mom Salonee. "Having to navigate the GO train and the TTC. A couple of times they got lost, but they were able to work it out. It was good to see her out in the real world and how she took it all in stride."

And though Salonee said her daughter had a hard time waking up for school most mornings, she had no problem getting up a 4:30 a.m. during her time as a page.

"It is very tiring," Siya said. "You go home, have dinner and go straight to bed."

Question period was easily the busiest time for the pages. And because of their busy schedules, the pages didn't have to keep up with their usual school work, except math. They also had to take a legislative process class each day.

On Fridays, when the legislature wasn't sitting, the pages got to go on field trips, going to Fort York and the Toronto Science Centre.

Toward the end of her time as a page, Aggarwal had the opportunity to have lunch with Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott, who also serves as the Speaker of the House.

"It was interesting to talk to him," she said, "to hear what he has to do, and how he manages things for his riding."

Aggrawal said she has been paying a little more attention to the news since she finished her term as a page. "Because you know more about how it works, you want to see what's happening."

Still, as much as she enjoyed it, Aggrawal doesn't see politics in her future. She would recommend be-



Ontario Legislature
Grade 8 Centennial student Siya Aggarwal recently completed three weeks as a legislative page at Queen's Park. The Grade 8 Centennial student enjoyed her time working in the legislature. Aggarwal also met with Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott (left), who is also Speaker of the House, and Centennial teacher Kristen Colquhoun (right), herself a former page.

ing a page to other students, though.

"If you're interested to travel by yourself, or in politics, you would like it," she

said. "It's a lot more than politics, you meet friends and you get the experience of how (government) works."

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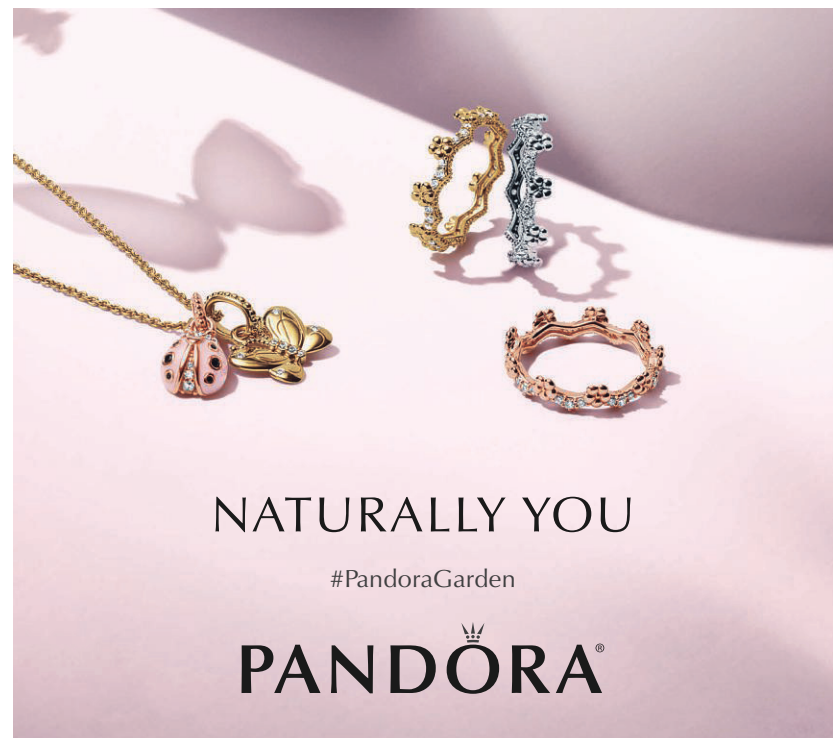
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