

Opinion

Halton Hills THIS WEEK

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Change the system

By Adrienne Lilly

As a university graduate with few job prospects in my field of political science, I tried to find some work for the summer to get more experience. I approached Colin Gibson, the editor of Halton Hills This Week to see if he needed volunteer writers for politics or for women's issues. He was willing to help me out and he eagerly gave me my first assignment, to interview and to write about each local party candidate (if chosen) for the upcoming federal election.

Although I too was keen on the idea of writing critically about politicians, my zeal vanished after my encounters with certain politicians who shall remain nameless. The rhetoric and the absurdity of false promises dished out to me made me ill. I've studied this stuff for the past four years and being fed the standard election promises reinforced my disgust with the political scene.

However, I can't lay all the blame on the politicians; they're merely conforming to the system - playing by the rules. They tell the electorate what we want to hear and then do what they want to once in power. And then, when politicians don't and/or can't do what we elected them for, we complain. Look at Bob Rae. He made appealing promises but had to adapt those vows to tame a growing deficit. Although it could be proven Rae got elected because the electorate was volatile (punish Libs and Tories and vote NDP), the more popular account (so our standard complaining is justified) is that Rae was elected for the promises which he is now breaking.

In essence then, my disgust lies not with the politicians for playing the game with promises but for we, the electorate, who are not concerned enough to make politicians keep their promises or to change the electoral system altogether.

And while you're fuming at this attack on you, the voter, and thus preparing for a counter-attack on me, you must realize that I'm not saying that I'm a great citizen because I support and act to achieve electoral reform. I'm just as guilty as the next person.

I didn't vote in the Charlottetown Accord referendum (plebiscite) because it was raining (as usual) in Waterloo, and I didn't want to get soaked while walking to the polling station. Also, I really didn't think that the Accord would change much anyway, (it tried to please everyone a little but really ticked everyone off a lot!) From what I've studied, apathy, even if people do vote in elections or in manipulated referendums? Is this the norm for the Canadian voter?

Kim Campbell was right. How can we who aren't involved in politics, constantly criticize those who are? How can I, the average citizen, who isn't involved in politics, be critical of politicians who work with the system to get elected?

As Spirit of the West sing in the song "Far Too Canadian", I'm so content to stand in line, wait and see, pass the time; talk a streak, fall asleep, wake up late, whine and weep...I'm so accepting, so defenseless, I am far too Canadian.

As it turns out, this is my first and last article. It's odd. In high school I did an internship with a local newspaper and one day I had to report on an accident scene. When I arrived, I saw the anguish on the faces of the teenagers involved and I felt very nauseous since what I was doing was basically profiting from their misery.

My latest journalistic attempt left one with a similar queasiness in the pit of my stomach. Although I am grateful for the opportunity to write, I'm afraid there is not enough Gravel in the world to stomach our present political system.

Thanks anyway, Colin.

The People's Corner

Put tobacco industry out of business

Editor's Note: A copy of the following letter was released to Halton Hills This Week for publication
Janet Lunn Stewart
Town Clerk

Re: Councillors reject a bylaw prohibiting smoking in public

I commend you and the members of council who tried their best to get the smoking bylaw passed. You seem to have an understanding of the severity of the problem.

I am one of the thousands who are allergic to cigarette smoke. It not only affects my heart because of the medicine I have to take, but my eyes, also. Cigarette smoke afflicts me with the painful condition called Conjunctivitis, an eye infection either caused by bacteria or pollutants, such as cigarette smoke. It is not only very painful, but embarrassing, because it turns my eyes blood red.

Smokers are costing me money, as I have to buy eye drops for this condition. Smokers are also robbing me of a social life, as I can't go

anywhere they pollute the air. I hardly eat out in restaurants (something that the rest of you takes for granted) for smoke billows and drifts. I'm fine in those few restaurants that have a room just for non-smokers. I can't go to parties, dinner and dances, social evenings where there are smokers. I can't browse in malls. I can't even go to a family member's wedding reception this year because a lot of the young people will be smoking.

A few weeks ago there was a program on T.V. about a growing number of children suffering from seizures due to chemical smells. The doctor on the program said it was the new disease of the 1990's. One of the chemical smells that produced seizures in these children was cigarette smoke, because cigarette smoke is chock full of chemicals. This is what is making so many non-smokers ill.

Like the poor parents of these little children, I, and thousands of others, are having a hard time coping with today's pollution (which

includes cigarette smoke) and other people's unhealthful, as well as distressing addiction.

Smokers are stubbornly addicted to nicotine and even have withdrawal symptoms. This is why it's so hard for them to stop smoking. Another grim reality of cigarette smoking is that it does cause lung cancer. Thousands die every year from it and there's been an increase in women smokers dying from lung cancer.

I wonder how many of you have really suffered in life, or felt intolerable pain. I wonder if any of you have seen a loved one die of this devastating disease. It's a long and dreadfully painful death and my heart goes out to all those dying right now from their cigarette addiction.

Do you ever give a thought to them? Will you ever give a thought to those little children in Canada suffering from seizures brought on by cigarette smoke and other pollutants, or to people

I'm just an ordinary per-

son who has had to put up with smokers as I have no power to do anything about it. You do have power and you can do something about it by banning smoking in public places as well as children, very Why should we have to suffer from someone else's terrible addiction? Why should people have to die such an agonizing way because some members of town and city council and the Government of Canada turn a convenient blind eye?

No disrespect to you, but if I was in your place, my conscience wouldn't allow me for a moment to forget the awful and utterly needless suffering that is going on right now due not only from smoking cigarettes, but because of other people's cigarette smoke. I'd not only try to ban cigarette smoking in public places, but put the tobacco industry out of business.

D. Whit
Georgetown

Ottawa denizens living in a different world

To the Editor:

The Senator's vote to increase their income with a \$6,000 a year expense allowance is a fine example of the attitude of both the civil servants and politicians in Ottawa. They live in a completely different world. They are the consumers of taxes, not producers and as long as the producers keep providing, their desire to consume will never be lessened.

The statement of Senator Lowell Murray, Conservative Senate House leader, saying the vote should be left until after the next election shows the contempt of these people for Canada and Canadians.

Although there are some politicians in the Conservative and Liberal ranks who when away from Ottawa propose some reforms but like Mulroney after his many promises during the 1984 election campaign, once safely in Ottawa, the old guard controls the jobs.

Until we have a new group who do not owe favors, we will never have a reformed civil service.

Rod Pinkney
Georgetown

Seniors' Safety Fair lauded

By Florence Wilkinson

June was Seniors' Month. This has been a designation for a few years now, and each year new events are planned to bring this fact to the attention of the general public. On June 12, I attended one of these events, and took in quite a few of the different items on the menu.

The event of which I write was Seniors' Safety Fair, which took place at Halton Regional Centre.

The Police were offering Seniors' Awareness Seminars; D. Hilliard showed what Special Skills Dogs of Canada can offer; L. Shirreffs gave a seminar on Wills and Power of Attorney. The Line Dancers, Grace Anglican Church Memorial Hand Bell Choir, the Oakville Entertainers, Ronald McDonald Safety Show, Gordon Massey and other things were offered inside.

One large space was filled with displays and information concerning all the things which seniors may need or use in our Halton area, and there was a space for children.

Outside, there was the Antique and Classic Car show, Ontario Safety League Highway Simulation; Street-proofing lessons, firemen and their equipment, clowns, balloons, Sparky the Dog, and other things.

The highlight of the day took place at high noon. Halton Region's Senior's Advisory Committee

Recognition Ceremony. This was an interesting time and was carried quickly along by a good M.C. and good speakers.

Valerie Cook, chair of the Elderly Services Advisory Committee/Good Neighbors Council, welcomed us to the "First Seniors' Safety Fair" and Valerie, along with Peter Pomeroy, Regional Chairman, presented certificates of recognition to the members of the Seniors' Advisory committees from Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville.

The people from Halton Hills who were present for certificates were Ross Bethel, Flo Carswell, Lois Fendley, Helen Giguere, Neila Mowat and Les Mellish. When I recall the mayor's recognition of volunteers in the Halton Hills area, it seems a good thing that those who represent us at the regional level should have recognition as well.

Perhaps the piece of information which was new to me was what we heard at the Special Skills Dogs of Canada seminar. These dogs are trained for individuals of all ages, and of any need. One dog which was recently trained was for a boy who had a very quick brain and no use of his body, and who was becoming so introspective that he would not talk to people. Within a short time, the dog had given his enough independence - i.e., picking up things that got dropped,

turning switches, etc. - that he could speak to a convention of 300 or so people.

Another dog opens drawers and takes out clothing for a woman who cannot bend over; another is aware of when her mistress is going to have a seizure and curls herself around the lady's legs to warn her not to move around. The woman has become free now to do things without worry, for the dog gives her plenty of warning when she is about to have a seizure that she can feel safe.

It appeared that all of the seminar rooms were too small for the people who wanted to come in. The many seniors who were in attendance were taking advantage of all the great things which had been prepared for them by the committee which had created the dream and then made the dream come true. The first Seniors' Safety Fair was definitely a success.

Another thing which I was able to do at the Fair was get a clearer picture of ESAC (Elderly Services Advisory Committee). I have seen the Good Neighbor information around the area - have even read the brochure - but putting it together with ESAC I had not done. Each of the volunteers in charge of the event were wearing Good Neighbors T-shirts, and Valerie Cook made a point of calling ESAC the Good Neighbors Council. I hope I will have this cleared up in my head for the future!

Letters Welcomed

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request.

Halton Hills This Week reserves the right to edit, revise, or reject any letters on the basis of factual errors, punctuation, spelling errors or as a result of space limitations.

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