

Acting up in the classroom

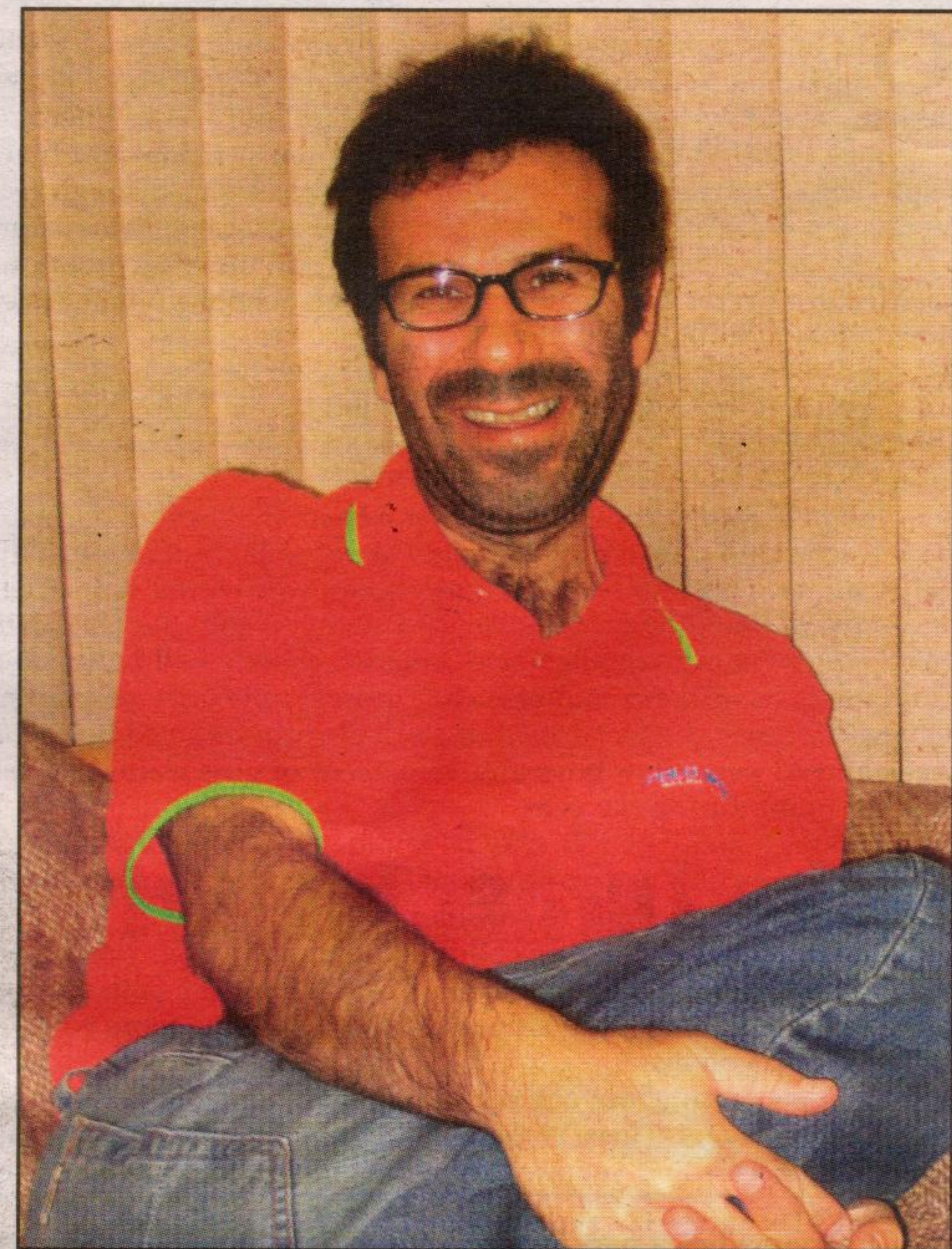
STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA DANIELLI

Yo Mustafa is emphatic in his message when it comes to the need for arts to be included in the school curriculum. "It's amazing how many of the kids are starving for the arts in our schools," he protests. "Not every kid is meant to sit behind a desk for 6 or 7 hours." Recognizing the problem isn't enough though, so Yo, through his theatre company West End Studio Theatre, is actively working on a solution. "We go into schools and do workshops with the kids," explains the father of three. "As a parent, I know that some schools can't afford the money for the bus trip to the Living Arts Centre (yet another venue when Yo can be found passing his trade onto teachers and students). It can get very expensive for the schools. This is more affordable and more convenient as well."

The workshops Yo offers are flexible in their structure and individually tailored to each school group, depending on their particular needs. Workshops can last a few hours, a day or even a week; it's really up to each school. "You have to be flexible," says Yo. "We're willing to incorporate what each class or school needs and we're willing to work with the teacher to make sure our workshop works with what they are teaching."

Acting is clearly a passion for Yo, one he takes great delight in sharing with a younger generation. "It feels really, really good," enthuses the ebullient actor. "I just love doing it, I love what I do." He is particularly vocal about the positive effect he has seen in the students following one of his workshops. Caught in an unguarded moment, he fights back tears recalling one workshop which included a grade eight girl who was not only blind, but also hampered by a neck and leg braces. "She spoke to me afterwards and thanked me," Yo reminisces in a quiet voice. "She said, 'For the first time in my life, you made me feel like I belonged.'" "These are the moments that stay with Yo, the kids clamouring for the amazing service that comes straight from the heart. "That's a phenomenal tool, when you strike a chord with a kid," he admits. "Everyone is talking about empowerment, why can't we start in grade 2 with building kid's confidences? Let's start with the kids so that when they reach high school, they're comfortable with who they are. Doing something so different, so creative, it brings out the best in people. It creates a comfort level for expressing themselves." Features included within Yo's workshops include cooperative

games, theatre terminology, body, voice and imagination work, as well as the art of stage positions. For more information about the school workshops or any of the other programs offered through West End Studio Theatre, please contact Yo Mustafa at 905-845-9378.



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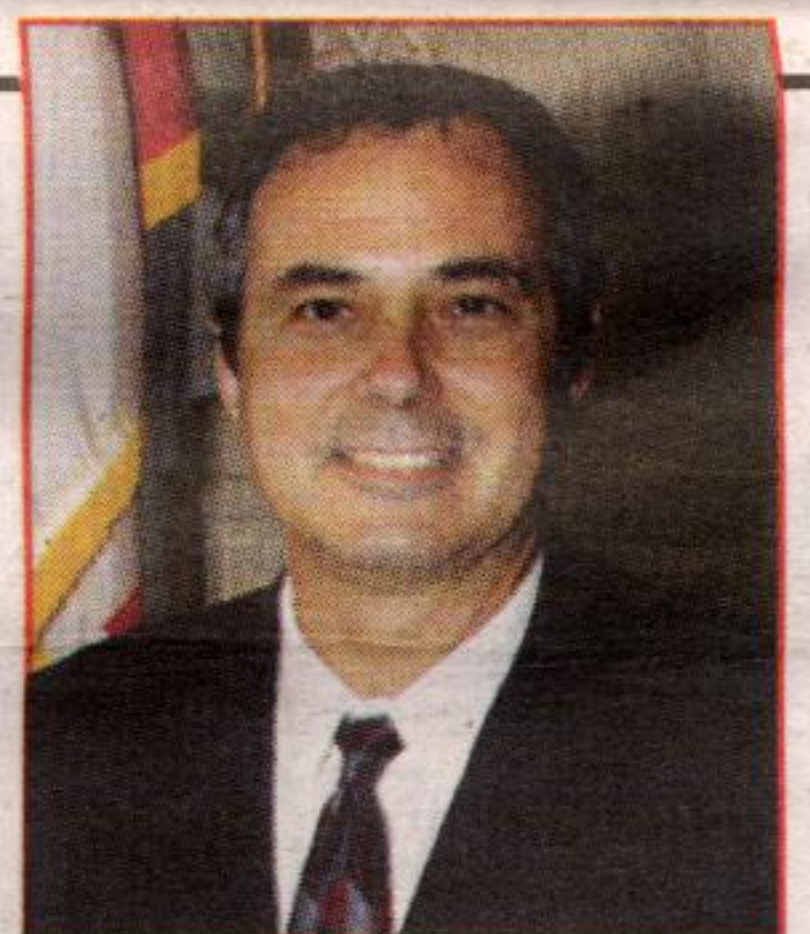
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House Notes

BY GARY CARR

Changing the way Government works



One of the reasons I decided to run federally was because of Paul Martin's commitment to change the way Government works. I have been very critical of governments of all political stripes that would not allow their Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament to vote freely. Too many of the votes were whipped votes, where the members were told how to vote. I am happy to say that Prime Minister Paul Martin has kept his promise. Most votes in the House of Commons for the Liberal party are free votes.

Members of Parliament in the new system also have an obligation to consult with their constituents. Hearing from my constituents on issues that are important to them, is now even more important because I am actually free to vote based on my own decisions.

I am your voice in Ottawa at the House of Commons, and I feel that it is important to be aware of the issues that are of concern to my constituents. I value your input and it is always prominent in our caucus discussions.

In order to discuss the issues I have created Citizen Advisory Committees. We currently have committees on the topics of Health Care, Citizenship and Immigration, Seniors, and Rural and Agriculture. We also will add committees as constituents volunteer.

These groups meet a minimum of 4 times a year in small groups of 10 in order to exchange real dialogue and debate on issues. They provide me with advice and feed back on issues and legislation which I then take back to caucus and the Ministers. In between meetings we share ideas through email, letters and phone calls. This allows an on going dialogue and is much more effective in dealing with the complex issues. In our Health Care committee we now have over 70 people advising me on this critical area.

Anyone can join and the members are both experienced in the field or just have an interest in a topic.

I want to thank all of the members of the committees for their work. The next round of meetings will be coming up in the fall. If you would like to become involved please call or email me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Together we can build a safer healthier and more prosperous Canada
Sincerely,

Gary Carr
Halton
Member of Parliament