

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Election nonsense

Hopefully municipal election candidates never have to be caught napping about their geography like their federal counterparts. Maybe we should ask them the direction the Credit River flows after sharp-eyed journalists discovered Stockwell Day said the Niagara River flowed south instead of north.

It's hard to believe there should be such print and electronic media commotion over a simple mistake in geography. It's good to know the commentators all got 100 per cent in geography when they were in school.

Day's faux pas brings to mind the election a few decades ago when Robert Stanfield was the Tory candidate. Stanfield might have been an underwear expert but his inability to catch a football was seized upon by the media as a national disgrace. He was portrayed as a fumbler who could never have the stuff of which prime ministers are made.

A few years later the same "experts" were proclaiming that Bob Stanfield was the best prime minister that Canada never had. Even if he did fumble a football.

A few of the other candidates have been known to have their foot stuck in their mouth too, but little, if anything, was said.

The tragedy of using such nonsense as political fodder during an election has to be the limits of absurdity. If we can't find anything better than that to accuse politicians with then we deserve the government we are going to get.

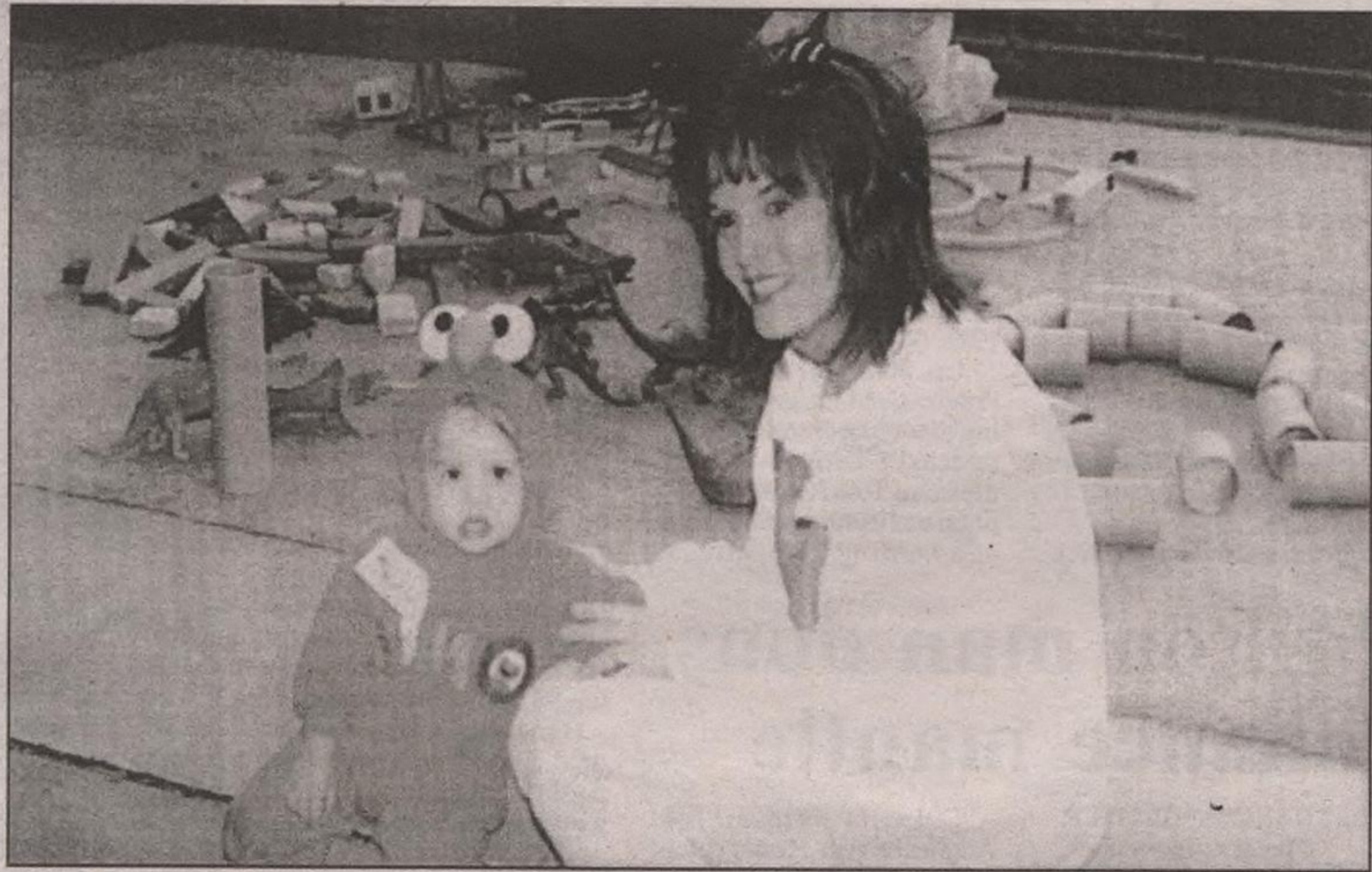
Foot size

According to the Recycling Council of Ontario, the average Canadian has a footprint the size of 15 football fields. Sound crazy? It's not, says the Council. Our estimated "ecological footprint" is estimated at 7.8 hectares or the equivalent of 15 football fields.

That's the amount of land it takes to support each of us in our daily lifestyle; to grow the food we eat, to mine the metals and petroleum to build and power cars, to grow the cotton we use to make our clothes or the forest we cut to build our houses.

The problem, according to the council, is that there are only 2.2 hectares of productive land for each person on earth. So the Recycling Council is asking people to think of ways to reduce their Eco-Footprints.

Their Council's allegory of 15 football fields assumes everyone on earth lives the same lifestyle as North Americans. Many, probably most of the world, does not. Nevertheless, with increasing standard of living in Third World countries it may one day be true. And the sooner we learn to make better use of our resources by recycling and turn down our acquisitive natures, the better. Next week, November 6 -12, is Waste Reduction Week, a good week to start.



LOOK! IT'S ELMO: Actually, it's two-year-old Jordan Youssef with her Mom, Julie, at the Parent-Child Centre's Hallowe'en party on Monday. - Ellen Piehl photo

Patients get lost in the system

BY MAGGIE PETRUSEHVSKY
The New Tanner

While it's obvious that people's medical conditions should not be public knowledge, the paranoia over privacy has gotten out of hand these days.

Responsible media people have always been cautious in reporting the condition of accident victims. But report them we must if rumours are to be squelched.

Last week's crash on 25 Sideroad brought the dilemma sharply into focus as The New Tanner tried to update the condition of the accident victims close to deadline.

Police reports listed two of the victims as being in critical condition. But how do we know what has happened to them?

The police don't keep track of the victims. Once injured parties get to hospital unless there's a question of charges, police don't usually even check on them. And if they do, given their shift schedules it's questionable if you can find the appropriate officer to provide answers.

While the victims' families know what's going on, who wants to bother them? Usually we turn to the hospital for our information. Hospitals used to have media-conversant staffers who understood our requests and the limits on the information we could be given. This time there not only was no one to provide the answers, staff supposedly hired to handle the job insisted the people had never been in the hospitals police told us.

The very ethic of 'news' means the media cannot ignore something which is under discussion by many local residents. At the same time you must ensure your facts are accurate.

In desperation The New Tanner knocked on the Stuckey's door and discovered their "critically" injured sister was already home. So much for the accuracy of the report on the child's condition. So much also for the Hospital For Sick Children's ability to keep track of its patients because their staff said no child by that name was admitted to hospital that weekend.

Sunnybrook Medical Hospital was unsure whether Mrs. Stuckey was one of their patients. That's when media get very nervous - just in case the patient has succumbed to injuries after arriving at hospital.

Thankfully our fears were unfounded.

But the third victim is still missing. The Toronto hospital to which she was supposedly dispatched by ambulance denies ever having seen her. That was after an unauthorized staffer said she was still in the hospital's emergency department - three days after the accident.

When victims from one accident can get that lost it destroys your confidence in the system.

Mine got even more shaken when my own daughter suddenly went missing in the system last week and because of 'confidentiality' her doctor's receptionist wouldn't tell me anything.

My daughter suffered a head in-

jury in a skidoo accident seven years ago and is officially a quadriplegic - albeit about as high-functioning a one as it's possible to find since she does everything for herself including drive a car.

However her pain medications have begun to fail her and this past summer's efforts to find replacements have not been very successful.

The morning in question we talked by telephone and arranged for her to come to my house after her doctor's appointment. It was extremely foggy and she was very upset over numerous issues including pain and exhaustion because her medication wasn't working. When she was more than two hours late and I couldn't raise her by her home or cell telephones, I called her doctor. I knew the time of her appointment and her condition and explained the reason behind my concern. The receptionist would only say she had been 'detained'. Fearing the worst and getting more frustrated by the minute at the evasive answers I finally asked if she was implying my daughter had had an accident and I should be checking with police or hospitals. That was up to me the 'dumb broad' (I'm being polite!) replied.

Intelligence finally prevailed on my fifth phone call to the office when another receptionist confided she had been there and was now gone. Such a simple answer and all it took to settle my fears. She did eventually turn up. I found her sleeping standing up on my doorstep. Exhaustion

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