

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Gotta have hope

A lot of people are probably sick of politics by now especially since we are over the threshold of the Christmas season.

We've had a provincial election, a municipal election, and the federal Liberal convention. Now the federal Progressive Conservatives and Canadian Alliance parties are considering merging into a Conservative party under the slogan "Unite the Right."

The mood for change seems to be almost everywhere expect in Saskatchewan where voters returned an NDP government in the face of strong media support for the opposition. Bernard Lord barely held on to New Brunswick for the Conservatives while the Liberals were knocked out in Newfoundland. And, of course, in Ontario, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals swept Ernie Eves and the Conservatives out of office. But in Halton Ted Chudleigh easily returned as M.P.P.

As usual, the new governing party says the outgoing government left the province in a fiscal mess with a deficit of around \$5 billion, a figure most of us can hardly imagine, let alone grasp. Mr. Eves, meanwhile, says it is all nonsense that by budget time he'd have had the situation in hand. Maybe.

Locally, candidates from Ward One (Acton), did very well, although less than 37% of voters turned out at the polls. Both Rick Bonnette and Clark Somerville took a step forward in their political careers by good margins. Two new political careers were launched when Jon Hurst and Mike O'Leary were one-two in the polls. We wish them success.

And, finally, Paul Martin has succeeded Jean Chretien as leader of the federal Liberals and will soon (maybe) be sworn in as Canada's new Prime Minister. The pundits contend he'll likely call an election in the Spring before the applause dies down. That's all we need - another election.

There are all kinds of promises floating around and, of course, some voters expect immediate action on them even before the new incumbent is sworn into office. As Dalton McGuinty has learned.

Don't expect miracles, folks, it just doesn't happen in politics either municipally, provincially or federally. Just hope for governing that's fair, competent, and above all compassionate.

No change needed

More than a few people are anxious to know what Paul Martin is going to do about the definition of "marriage" which the Chief Justice of Canada declared is discriminatory because it doesn't allow the "marriage" of same-sex couples.

The Ontario Divisional Court ruling in 1992 said the definition of marriage dating back to 1866, as the union of one man and one woman, couldn't be justified in a "free and democratic society." The court required Parliament to pass legislation before July 2004, to comply with their ruling.

In a brief to the Ontario Court of Appeal, last April, Canada's attorney general argued that by the law of Canada, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was not meant to be extended to same-sex couples. He also argued that the Charter was never intended to alter fundamental societal structures and institutions and finally was not discriminatory since it does not imply the dignity of other relationships are diminished.

That has been supported many times in the House of Commons, the last time on June 8, 1999 by a vote of 216-55. Now another group of legal experts contend the definition of marriage is written into the body of the Constitution of 1867 and is supported by subsequent acts, up to and including patriation in 1982 which would mean redefining marriage is beyond the scope of judicial opinions since it is embodied in the Constitution itself.

To change the definition of marriage therefore you would have to amend the Constitution, a more complicated process.

Recently a vote in the House of Commons on a Canadian Alliance motion supporting the present definition of marriage was only defeated because some MPs were forced to vote against it. It embarrassed the PM who expected an easy passage.

Now those who support the present definition are waiting to see how Mr. Martin, a lawyer incidentally, will react. It has been said he is uncomfortable with a change and also vice versa. In any event same-sex marriage could be an issue in the next federal election if the present definition is upheld or changed.



GRAND OPENING: Acton's Dream Team-elect - Clark Somerville, Jon Hurst, Rick Bonnette and Mike O'Leary, left, cut the ribbon of Blue Springs Spa with owners Kristine and Jorg Cieslok. - Danielle McIsaac photo.

Penny saved - a penny earned?

A penny saved is a penny earned. Then there is the one ... a penny for your thoughts. Sometimes that mere one-cent is taken for granted.

A few months ago in the midst of a telephone conversation with my sister, she began to tell me about how irked she was when she had to almost ask for her change of one-penny following the purchase of a coffee and muffin.

Trying not to, pardon the expression, sound like a penny pincher, she was upset that someone would not give you your change that you were entitled to, instead assume you would want them to keep it.

I knew what she meant. I'm a "wait for my change" kind of gal. My opinion is if I choose to leave my change, for whatever reason, whether it is to put in the give-a-penny, take-a-penny box, or for some children's charity, that should be my choice, not an assumption.

My sister insisted that we could not be the only people frustrated by this, there are people in the service industry who hesitate to give you change. "You should write about this...I'm telling you," she said. For research, she even suggested that I go around town buying things that total \$1.99 to find out which places gave you change without having to ask for it.

At first, I shrugged it off, then with second thoughts I started to do some unofficial research on the topic and found that there are a lot of ticked-



By
Angela Tyler

off people.

In one conversation with a lady from Acton, I, without any thought or planning, started talking about this. She was so emotional about the topic, I thought she was going to get right out of her chair and start a protest. She knows my sister and during the discussion, she told me to make sure I tell my sister she's right and she was in agreement.

I then started to wonder. How much could an establishment or even an employee make with a simple penny over a few years? I realize that many fast food companies do donate their "change" to children's foundations. However, I still wondered.

I turned to the Internet for some fast food companies' profiles to find out how many stores or franchises they had. To figure out some quick information, I took two large Canada wide franchise companies. One company had over 2,000 locations while the other had over 400.

I admit, I have no idea how many customers any of these locations have per hour or even per day, so between a few others, and myself, we took an estimate based on our consumer knowledge. If one of these franchises had on average 40

customers per hour and only one-third of these customers left their penny change that would be 12 cents per hour. Now this might not happen every hour, so I took 10 hours on average. Now, \$1.20 per day doesn't sound like a lot, but if you take the franchise being open 360 days for 10 years, that could add up to over \$4,000. That is just for one. If a company has 2,000 stores, it could easily add up to tens of THOUSANDS of dollars, all with a mere penny.

The other thing I found in my unofficial research is that there are quite a few people who are annoyed when a waiter or waitress asked, "Can I get you some change?" when you pay your dining bill.

Why should this be asked? Shouldn't the wait staff automatically bring your change? A tip is something given when the service and food quality is good. It should not be assumed by the person serving. One person I talked with said if they are asked that when they pay, it is reflected in the tip they leave.

On a similar note, I was once told you could always tell an experienced waitperson by how they bring back your change. If, for example, your change is \$15, an experienced waitperson would not bring a \$5 and \$10. Instead, they would bring some small change along with smaller bills, therefore giving you an option on how much of a tip to leave.

Just something to think about.



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