

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## A man of integrity

Halton MP Julian Reed's announcement that he will retire from politics after 28 years in both the provincial and federal Houses of Parliament is a startling reminder that the old guard is changing and making place for the new.

Although he represented the Liberal party, Julian Reed's door was always open to people of all political persuasions. There was never a hint of scandal or base politics in all the years he served in both Houses. Even those of different political stripes or opinions could not attack his integrity.

Suggestions he may be retiring because of the current scandal in Ottawa can be summarily dismissed as being politically motivated or simply not knowing the man.

In his official statement Mr. Reed said he has come to realize that in reaching the age of 68 he has other avenues he wishes to pursue, including continuing energy interests and an acting career he partly abandoned when he first ran for office in 1975 as a provincial candidate. He'd also like to spend more time with his wife Deanna who held the fort at their Norval home farm while Julian sat in both Houses.

Mr. Reed's interest in energy is not something new. He developed his own generating station on the Credit River, which runs through his farm, back when we had another energy crisis. He played a big part in having ethanol accepted as a fuel additive charring the Liberal Ethanol Expansion Program. He has been a passionate advocate for the environment and served constituents in any way he could.

Although he came from Conservative roots, he first put his name up for election in 1975 as a Liberal when the province and school boards were closing smaller and rural schools. In his case, the Norval public school. He fought to preserve a school in Norval and has never looked back.

Mr. Reed will complete his term in office which could end this spring if the PM calls an election which the latest skinny from Ottawa seems to support. Much could depend on how the Liberal support goes.

In any event, it should not take any lustre from the political career of Julian Reed whom most of his constituents have been proud to have represent them both in Toronto and Ottawa.

## Let the movie speak

The 40 day season of Lent was ushered in yesterday (Ash Wednesday) with an ecumenical noon hour service at St. Joseph's church, sponsored by the Acton Ministerial Association. The regular weekly noon hour Wednesday services attract little or no controversy but a new movie on the same theme which premiered on Ash Wednesday has created a lot of praise, media attention – and criticism.

Paid for and produced by well-known movie star Mel Gibson it is directed at the heart of Christian belief – the 12 hour Passion of the Christ. The movie follows the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate and the subsequent Roman scourging, carrying of the cross to Calvary for crucifixion.

The film is graphic, spares none of the bloody details of a Roman crucifixion and scourging.

Reality shows are in fashion these days so the Passion of the Christ is obviously of the same genre. However, its release has generated a lot of criticism claiming it is anti-Semitic and the product of traditional belief in the literal truths of the Bible. Even the language of the movie is Latin and Aramaic, the tongues of the time with English subtitles.

Much of the criticism comes from those who have not seen the movie or from groups who reject the biblical accounts. Mel Gibson, in a television interview, says it certainly follows the biblical accounts since it is at the heart of Christian belief, but is not anti-Semitic. Some of the critics forget Jesus was also a Jew, as was Caiaphas, the high priest who is portrayed as one of, if not the chief, prosecutor.

The main beneficiary of all the criticism is the movie itself, as press agents couldn't have bought all the publicity it has received.

It is a sort of reversal for those who seek out clergymen to condemn some sex-laden flick in order to gain publicity. Their proscription of course, is seen as inducement to see the forbidden fruit.

Like most of the critics, we have not seen the movie. It will have to speak for itself.



M-M-M GOOD: Dawson Somerville, 5, along with sister Megan, 3, and cousin Nicole Bijaz were amongst the early birds enjoying their pancake super at the St. Alban's Shrove Tuesday dinner.- Angela Tyler photo

## Unfair assessments HHAAA target

Home owners of Halton Hills facing "enormous" increases in their 2003 assessment notices are being reminded that they only have until March 31 of 2004 to file an appeal with the Assessment Review Board (ARB). The form is available from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. (MPAC). ARB or the municipal offices in Georgetown, the Halton Hills Homeowners Assessment Association (HHAAA) notes in a letter to residents.

The association says that, based on their research, "more than one in four properties within Halton Hills is assessed incorrectly." Members of the association feel the MPAC system is seriously flawed. They made a presentation to Halton Hills Council on March 3, 2003, after an initial meeting in Acton on Feb. 12 with more than 200 ratepayers in attendance, which they felt pointed out problems and inaccuracies with MPAC's system.

"We suggested Council work with fellow Municipalities and Regions to lobby the province for competition to MPAC," said Mac Sprowl, chairman of HHAAA. "We believe the

fastest, easiest and cheapest way to receive better assessment service is through the introduction of competition. MPAC appears to have little accountability. The fact that competition is not present in Ontario's property assessment has, in our opinion, led to this lack of accountability. Numerous newspaper articles are evidence of this. Special treatment for those of influence, poor customer service for those seeking information on how their assessments were calculated and ignoring request for reconsideration."

MPAC's Board of Directors is made up of eight municipal representatives, five from the private-sector (all wearing corporate hats) and two are provincial appointees. The HHAAA believes there should be representation from the residential homeowners. Since 3.6 of Ontario's 4.2 million properties, or about 85 per cent, are residential.

Multi-residential, commercial and industrial properties cannot have an assessment related tax increase of more than five per cent per year. The HHAAA would like to see this program

extended to the residential and farm property classes, Sprowl says.

The HHAAA was pleased when Council passes unanimous support for their resolutions. Copies were sent to then Premier Eves, Minister of Finance Janet Ecker, MPP Ted Chudleigh, Liberal Opposition Leader Dalton McGuinty, NDP Leader Howard Hampton, and Chair of the Municipalities of Burlington, Milton and Oakville.

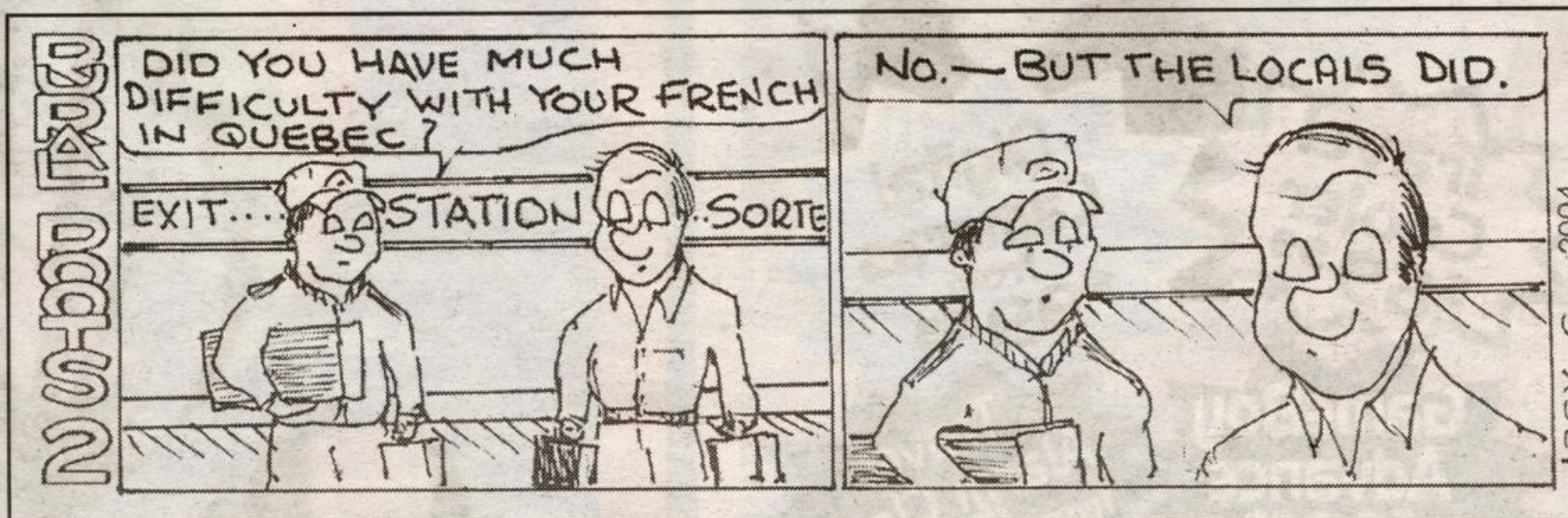
HHAAA chairman Sprowl addressed both Halton Region's Finance Committee on Dec. 10 and Regional Council on Dec. 17. Association treasurer Ron Trimble also addressed Regional Council on Dec. 17.

The HHAAA was further pleased when the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton Ms. Caroline di Cocco, asked what the new Liberal government was going to do about the "problem we are seeing in property assessment" and the Minister of Finance Greg Sorbara acknowledged there is work to be done. "I can tell you we consider this a very serious problem."

So what can be done?

Beginning in January, more

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