

*Editorial*

# Mayor's race

When looking at this year's municipal election mayoral race one startling fact is difficult to overlook: the four candidates have served a combined total of 65 years on Halton Hills council. A not-so-surprising fact is that only one of the four will be part of the 2003-2006 council.

That's a lot of experience and political know-how to lose from a council that is likely to see several new faces in new positions.

Incumbent Mayor Kathy Gastle is being challenged by two long-time regional councillors—Rick Bonnette and John Day—as well as former mayor Marilyn Serjeantson whom Gastle defeated in 2000.

To be frank, all are fully aware of the issues and challenges the town faces and have the necessary knowledge to handle the job. What this election comes down to is the way the candidates conduct themselves, their leadership style and their ability to properly recognize the voters' concerns and to act on their best behalf.

So let's look at the candidates.

Serjeantson is facing an uphill battle, having been out of the council loop for three years and waiting until the last minute to declare her intention to run. Her absence from council since 2000 is a major drawback, considering the fact her opponents are council veterans who have had their fingers on the pulse of the community for the past three years. For that reason alone we are unable to support Serjeantson.

Day has served as a regional councillor for nine years and has worked hard for his constituents and, we believe, takes great pleasure from helping those in need. His penchant for listening to residents' concerns is his greatest strength but, alas, also his greatest weakness. He openly laughs at his council nickname—"John Delay"—and sees nothing wrong in sometimes taking an inordinate (and unnecessary) amount of time in making a decision. The office of mayor demands decisiveness and this has not been Day's forté. There is also the matter of his conviction for impaired driving last year and the question of decision-making it brings. However, it is up to each voter to determine if this should be a factor when casting a ballot.

Decisiveness has not been a weakness of Gastle. She promised, in 2000, initiative and vision and has delivered. She also vowed to work for the creation of hiking trails, development with less Ontario Municipal Board involvement and the protection of heritage properties and has, for the most part, been successful. While much of the groundwork was laid during Serjeantson's term, Gastle was the mayor of the day when the 401 Corridor project took its first baby steps towards being the economic boon many expect it will (and must) be.

However, Gastle has been less successful seeing results from other 2000 pledges, specifically, "the immediate increase of industrial development, improved roads, no new taxes and rejuvenation of the Acton and Georgetown downtown cores". Also, under her watch council has become more divided than we'd like to see, the proof being two long-term councillors are now gunning for her job, the 6-5 council vote to force the resignation of CAO Steve Andrews (Gastle voted in favour of retaining him), and the majority of councillors are working (both publicly and privately) for other candidates.

Bonnette, a longtime councillor for Acton, has provided his constituency with good representation. He has shown he can make the correct, tough decisions (supporting the move to demolish the old Acton Arena) no matter how unpopular.

He has served as chair on the region's planning and public works committee and been a member of the budget committee and supported cuts to region programs that kept regional tax hikes in line with the inflation rate. He has also taken a lead role in doctor recruitment for the town, fought hard for a sports park in Acton, wants a 100 per cent smoking ban and realizes a wide scope of opinions is needed in how to market the 401 Corridor.

But can he do the job? While critics may contend that he is "too small town", it should be noted he has sat at the regional council table for 18 years and must realize that as mayor he will have to be a voice for all of Halton Hills—a town facing major growth issues both internally and from the outside (Brampton development). As he said at an all-candidates' meeting when asked if he could be an effective voice for Georgetown, "If I only represented Acton then I guess I won't be a long-term mayor, will I?"

Day's consensus-building style, Gastle's directness and Bonnette's mix of both offers voters a choice rarely seen in a mayoral election. The town would be well-served by any of these candidates.



## Letters to the editor...

### Remembrance service set for Nov. 9

Dear editor,

We are again preparing for the Remembrance service on Nov. 9 at Holy Cross Church.

It was nine years ago that Peter Barrow, Dale Wood, Lois Fraser and myself had our first meeting. The plan was to do this for the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, but there was such an appreciation from the public that it was made into a yearly event to honour and remember the wartime sacrifice

made by Canadians, not only overseas, but also in our own community.

The Georgetown Choral Society, the Georgetown Children's Chorus, the Royal Canadian Legion and the Georgetown Ministerial Association came on board with us. The two choirs are practising every Monday and Tuesday evening to prepare for this event.

We extend a special welcome to our veterans and their families and to the public to attend.

Tom Schenk, Georgetown

### Discourteous dog owners abusing school land

Dear editor,

My children attend Pineview Public School on Trafalgar Road. It is a lovely school with a beautifully fenced schoolyard. Unfortunately there are many dog owners in our community who feel this schoolyard should, and can, be used as a leash-free bathroom for their dogs.

It is a common courtesy to poop and scoop, but it is also the law. The other bylaw in place is that dogs must be leashed at all times on public property. These infractions carry a maximum penalty of \$5,000. To all the people using and abusing this area shame on you! This is a schoolyard and our children do not have a

choice whether or not to play in it. How would you like your children tracking dog feces home on their shoes or better yet catching one of the many horrendous diseases children can get from dog excrement.

Many concerned parents are monitoring the situation and the appropriate action will be taken to correct the situation.

Beth Wingfield and other concerned parents, Georgetown

With the municipal election only five days away, *The Independent & Free Press* has reserved the right to not publish further letters commenting on candidates.

# The Independent & Free Press

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