

OPINION

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Leading questions

Canadians will head to the polls October 14— the day after Thanksgiving— and the coming weeks will determine which party will enjoy a feast and which will come away looking like turkeys.

For all five major parties this election will have far-reaching effects and, as is usually the case, some of the current party leaders may be spearheading their party's bid for power for the final time.

Heading into the campaign there are specific challenges facing each of the leaders as we see it.

Stephen Harper (Progressive Conservatives): The current prime minister's biggest obstacle is one of belief— as in can we believe what he says? Only months after bringing in legislation to have fixed elections every October Harper suddenly deemed Parliament to be "dysfunctional" and called the election. Critics say it was just another example of Harper showing a propensity for saying one thing, then doing another. He has been described as aloof and most Canadians, we'd venture, would view him that way. That's an opinion he must alter.

Stephane Dion (Liberals): The Grit leader's biggest challenge will be to show Canadians he does indeed possess a personality. In recent polls he has ranked well behind Harper (39 per cent) and even trails NDP Jack Layton (15 per cent) when asked which leader would make the best PM. Dion's 13 per cent total indicates that voters will have to be sold on him— not his carbon tax plan— in order for the Liberals to take power.

Jack Layton (New Democratic Party): If the economy is the dominant issue in the campaign Layton and the NDP will be hardpressed to keep, let alone build on, their current 29 seats. Opinion polls consistently indicate the NDP rank far behind the Tories and Liberals when it comes to which party is best equipped to deal with economic issues.

Gilles Duceppe (Bloc Quebecois): Polls indicate Quebecers have become less enchanted with the separatist movement. That's good for the big three parties— not to mention Canada.

Elizabeth May (Green Party): May has nowhere to go but up having never had a member elected to Parliament (ex-Liberal turned Green member Blair Wilson doesn't count). Anything less than getting a seat should be considered a failure.

What do you think?

Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

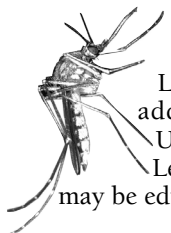
The Georgetown Raiders kicked off a new Jr. A hockey season Saturday.

How many games do you normally attend each year?

- None (89%)
- 1-5 (0%)
- 6-10 (0%)
- More than 10 (11%)

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Government bureaucracy angers mom

Dear editor,

I've always maintained the biggest challenge of having a special needs child is having to deal with government departments and agencies.

This was my latest frustration. My daughter will be 41 in September. I recently got a notice that her photo health card was up for renewal.

Five years ago, I went through the extra effort to get a health card with her photo on it as none of her other forms of identification had a place for her picture.

For two weeks, I spent hours trying to get through to the Ministry of

Health to make an appointment.

Recently I finally got through at 3 p.m. The less-than-pleasant staff person asked what I would be bringing as means of identification. I

explained that my daughter was non-verbal and low-functioning; that I would bring her current health card with her picture on it, birth certificate, social insurance card, a disability pension statement with both hers and my name and address on it.

She said that I would have to produce something with my daughter's signature on it. I asked why. She said it was to prove her identification. I

explained that she was incapable of doing this.

I was then advised that I would have to get a medical exemption form and take it to our family doctor for completion. I asked why I would have to do this when her current health card already has her picture on it, proving she is who she is. She said if I didn't bring this form, I ran the risk of being turned away. I pointed out that it just didn't make sense for me to have to sit, with my daughter, for an hour or more in our family doctor's office and probably pay a fee for a piece of paper that would confirm what is visually obvious.

She told me it was up to me and offered to give me an appointment the very next day or the day after that! I'm trying to figure out how a department could have their phones constantly tied up between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. with people wanting to make appointments for renewing their health card and yet have appointments open that week and all of next!

I made the appointment and she ended the call by saying, sarcastically, "good luck".

If I get turned away because I don't have a medical exemption form for someone who has had the same abilities/disabilities for over 40 years, I will be writing again AND contacting my Member of Parliament!

June Beeny,
Georgetown

Dirt and ragweed make park an 'absolute mess'

Dear editor,

My home backs onto Dominion Gardens Park (if you can call it that now) which is an absolute mess.

There is 5-6 ft. ragweed growing all around the extended parking lot and on the five-foot mounds of dirt that take up half the park area (which were only supposed to be there temporarily).

If the fact that so many people have severe allergies wasn't bad enough, the mosquitoes are horrendous and these mountains of ragweed have created a perfect environment for them and West Nile virus. You can't sit out past dusk without getting eaten alive and you can't sit out without sneezing your head off.

I spoke to a person who is overseeing the Dominion Gardens project

recently about the ragweed situation and the fact that kids are riding their bikes on this massive mound of dirt and ragweed. He said they were having problems with the contractor and they were trying to get things resolved by having a meeting every Tuesday.

There has been no work done on this project for the past two months other than a couple of guys putting up concrete signs for the splash pad (which doesn't exist) so obviously, the meetings are a waste of time. The city should be pulling the contractor's bond.

The park is a mess and if they can't get the contractor to bulldoze those mounds of ragweed they should be sending out their own crews to get rid of it.

Sandy Campbell, Georgetown