

EDITORIAL

with Frances Niblock

Nickel and dime

Almost before people got a good look at the proposed plans for the new Acton library, there's word that a huge budget overrun may mean that key features – inside and out – could be cut.

To save more trees and cover unexpectedly high costs for retaining walls and fill along the Black Creek flood plain, the budget jumped to \$4-million from \$3.5-million.

Although the project manager asked Town Council for an additional \$365,000 to save most of the features, sensing some opposition to the request, Acton Councillor Jon Hurst convinced his colleagues to not debate the request, but to have staff report back with actual tender prices with accurate budget package choices.

While the proposed cuts could result in removal of a main entrance from River Street, cheaper outside finishes, removal of a reading deck and a plaza, they would not change the shape, size or functionality of the library officials promised.

In the words of Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson, it's not a case of the design being too extravagant, but of unforeseen site costs required by Credit Valley Conservation.

Johnson said the public is "very excited" by the design and they shouldn't start "hacking away" at the project before they know the prices.

During a poorly attended public meeting on the proposed designs last month, former Acton councillor and library board member Norm Elliott, commenting on proposed cost-cutting measures, said it's always disappointing to start off with great ideas, because when they start "whittling away at things, the totality of the project gets destroyed in some respects." He suggested that there could be some fundraising efforts to help with the costs.

While budgets are tight and reserves are low, the thought of cutting items like an accessible entrance from River Street, windows at the roofline for light and ventilation – an item high on staff's wish list – and a reading deck don't sit well with a lot of people.

An unscientific poll of library users found that most want to see the new library built as now proposed, despite the increased costs. As Councillor Hurst said, they don't "nickel and dime" other capital projects to save money, so why should they do so with the library.

Why, indeed.

Best caution used by a ratepayer who questioned if the Town knew if a problem with its website was because of human error or an equipment problem:

"You should always sleep in your guest bed." Jack Pemberton

Most sobering baby boom echo stat: In 1955, one in 14 Canadians was a senior. In 2006, it was one in seven, and in 2031 it will be one in every three.



DANCE CREW: Grade eight student Angus Agnew (with hat) and Junior Kindergartner Alex Kack strutted their stuff at a fundraising dance-a-thon at St. Joseph Catholic School on Friday.

– Frances Niblock photo

Going for the Olympic green medal

By David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola

Science Matters
By David Suzuki



Several people have asked me if the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics will be the greenest games yet. The answer may be yes – if we're talking about the abundance of greenery and lack of snow brought on by record high temperatures during one of the earliest spring seasons the city has experienced.

With respect to environmental impact, all Olympic Games leave a very large footprint. Thousands of people flying in from all over the world, along with local transportation and the infrastructure that must be created, mean a lot of carbon emissions get spewed into the atmosphere.

What many people may not realize is that, along with sports, the Olympic movement has two other official "pillars": culture and the environment. People in Vancouver have seen evidence of the cultural pillar, with an amazing line-up of music, theatre, and other cultural events for the Cultural Olympiad.

Vancouver Olympic organizers have also tried to reduce the environmental impact of the 2010 Games. For example, venues and infrastructure have been built using energy-efficient technologies, clean-energy sources will be used for many aspects of the Games, and carbon offsets will balance out a significant portion of the emissions from the Games. As a result of these

and other initiatives, the 2010 Olympics are expected to produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions than previous Winter Olympics.

But that doesn't mean the Vancouver Olympics are as green as they could be. In fact, we may eventually have to rethink our approach to such global mega-events if we are serious about reducing the impacts of climate change, particularly as the very future of winter Olympics depends on having winters cold enough to sustain snow and ice.

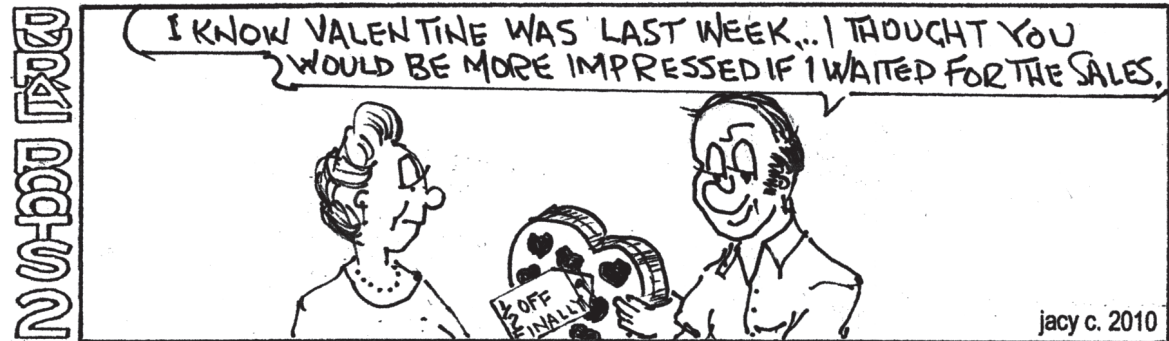
We hope that future host cities, and the IOC itself, will learn from the lessons of the 2010 Olympics. For example, despite an emphasis on public-transit use during the Games, the Vancouver Olympics will leave the region with few long-term improvements in sustainable transportation. Instead, the highway up to Whistler was widened at a cost of \$600 million. And so far, 2010 Olympic organizers haven't made the most of opportunities to tell the story of their climate initiatives to Canadians and the world. Because so many people will be focused on the host city, and because climate change is a defining issue of our time, the winter Olympics offer an unparalleled opportunity to inspire billions of people around the world with solutions to global warming.

The IOC should also put in a place an external monitoring body for each host city to ensure that standards for addressing climate impacts are upheld. For example, the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012 was created to increase accountability of the London Olympic organizers with respect to their sustainability commitments.

And because not all host countries have the same financial means, the IOC could create an environmental fund, with financing from media-rights revenues or other sources. The fund could help less wealthy countries to incorporate environmental considerations into their games, and to invest in long-term environmental and social initiatives in their regions.

Of course, environmental initiatives around Olympic Games are a shared responsibility. For the Vancouver Games, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, the organizing committee, and other organizations are all accountable when it comes to ensuring that the Games themselves are green and that they leave a lasting legacy for the region.

The Vancouver Olympics have demonstrated that climate change initiatives, such as green venues and clean energy, are not only doable but affordable and can leave lasting legacies for host cities. Future Olympics can and should raise the bar even higher by finding ways to reduce their climate impact and inspiring their worldwide audiences with climate solutions.



THE NEW TANNER
PUBLISHING LTD.

373 Queen Street East, Unit 1
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
email: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com

(519) 853-0051 Fax: (519) 853-0052

Publisher
Ted Tyler

Editor
Frances Niblock

Editorial Contributors
Mike O'Leary Angela Tyler Denise Paulsen

Advertising and Circulation
Marie Shadbolt

Composing Ken Baker

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