

Comment

The Canadian Champion

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Fasten your seatbelts

Less than a month ago, there seemed little doubt who would be the next prime minister of Canada.

Most political observers considered Paul Martin to be the unflappable golden boy heading toward a fait accompli Liberal victory this spring or fall.

What a difference an auditor-general's report can make.

With the arrival of the sponsorship program scandal our nation's political landscape is experiencing unprecedented upheaval leaving the public's trust of elected officials — like the missing 100 million tax dollars — nowhere to be found.

Will the electorate be willing to look beyond Prime Minister Martin's high-ranking affiliation with a Chrétien administration likely to be remembered for all the wrong reasons?

As Martin's party sees its once seemingly insurmountable lead in popular support evaporating faster than you can say Sheila Fraser, the Conservatives find themselves in relatively unfamiliar territory in recent history — a tight second, while the NDP appears to be going nowhere.

Somewhere in Ottawa there has to be a high-profile CPC member or two kicking

themselves for not choosing to challenge for the party's leadership.

Closer to home, the change in the political landscape turned equally dramatic last week.

Halton MP Julian Reed dropped the bombshell that he isn't seeking re-election for personal reasons.

Reed's news came less than a week after the MP had said he would run again.

Before the week was out, another face familiar to Halton voters had delivered another eyebrow-raising announcement.

Gary Carr, the outspoken Oakville MPP and former speaker of the house, re-surfaced from a hockey coaching job in British Columbia to announce a change of heart where politics and political parties are concerned. With Reed's intention to call it quits when his current term ends, Carr now seeks the Liberal nomination for Halton.

If this keeps up, Halton voters will need a scorecard to keep track of the candidates and their parties.

Fasten your seat-belts folks. The fireworks that are likely to fly during the sponsorship program public inquiry may make the election that follows seem rather anticlimactic.

Our Readers Write

Support for family overwhelming, says woman

Dear Editor:

The incredible response last week to the plight of the family who lost their home and possessions to a horrendous house fire should make Miltonians new and old feel proud of our community.

Within 24 hours of hearing of this family's disaster, there was an outpouring of generosity.

Money and clothing came in to collection centres at Chris Hadfield and E. W. Foster schools almost immediately, and volunteers were able to deliver two large truckloads of new clothing and a substantial cash donation to help tide this family over until their insurance company can get them resettled.

At Chris Hadfield School, offers of help flowed in from individuals

from all over town — from those who've lived in Milton for generations and carry a strong rural tradition of helping those in need to those who've recently moved to town and who've embraced their new neighbours.

Several businesses in town offered immediate aid, and our newest community church — The Sanctuary — also offered help.

In one of the most touching stories at Chris Hadfield School, a scheduled birthday party for a grade 2 student this past weekend was turned into an opportunity to donate gifts for the family's daughter, who lost all the gifts from her recent sixth birthday party in the fire.

Several parents, all of whom wished to remain anonymous, sim-

ply emptied their wallets to make cash donations.

Not one person asked for recognition or charitable tax receipts. They just wanted to help.

When we opened Chris Hadfield School, two of our goals were to welcome new families to all Milton has to offer and to be involved in creating a strong sense of community among our new neighbours.

The fantastic support and compassion shown last week shows that Milton's newest residents are already a vital part of our community.

Thank you for sharing.

Rose Brooks,
secretary

Chris Hadfield School

Hey Milton, ready to take a leap this Sunday?

Hey Milton, ready to take a leap?

This Sunday is February 29 — that once-every-four-years phenomenon that gives many people an excuse to try new things and attempt to bust out of their routine.

Actually there's no real mystery surrounding leap years. Our planet's solar year — the time it takes to orbit around the sun — is exactly 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. So every four years we get an extra day to make up the difference.

Of course there's nothing practically significant about February 29 — it's just another 24-hour period on the calendar. But then the same can be said for January 1, even though every year most of us mark that day with a wide variety of New Year's resolutions.

So with that in mind, let's take advantage of this 'free' day with our own leap — even if it's a

small one.

And there's plenty of ways to do so right here in Milton.

If the February blahs have still got you down, why not turn the tables on old man winter with a leisurely stroll at one of our picturesque conservation sites.

Those looking to add a little adrenaline to their outdoor sojourn can visit Glen Eden Ski and Snowboard Centre — which among its 12 or so slopes offers a beginner-level hill for first-timers, and those (like myself) who haven't been on skies for many years.

For the adventuresome sort, there's also nearby Burlington Air Park — where Spectrum Airways has an introduction to flying lesson for just \$49.95. Even if you only make the appointment on Sunday, the idea of soaring above your hometown — which I did about nine years ago (and



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front

with practically no motion sickness) — will give you a real sense of spontaneity. Trust me, it's a great way to spend a half-hour.

If you're looking to simply shake up your routine a bit, perhaps trying a local restaurant you haven't visited yet could do the trick. Milton — specifically Main Street — has a number of cozy little eateries that for many of us provide a nice

break from our everyday consumption.

Or how about using February 29 to abstain from one of those indulgences — like smoking or junk food — that we had committed to cutting out of our lives just eight weeks ago.

In my own case, Tim Hortons can surely survive without the \$2.40 for my morning and afternoon medium double-double. Well, maybe I can cut back to just one this Sunday.

Of course none of these things is going to magically change our lives. But hey, a departure from the norm — even a small one, even for one day — certainly can't hurt.

And when February 29 falls on a Sunday, there's even more incentive to take advantage of that extra day and do something different or special. And, in my opinion anyway, watching those mind-numbingly boring Oscars doesn't count.