

When democracy stinks

Believe it or not, you do not have to be a Russian Politburo member to believe that democracy can stink. No, democracy reared its ugly head in Midland, Port McNicoll, Victoria Harbour and other areas of Tay Township just last Thursday.

It was at that time that the residents of these glorious communities were forever banished to the political wilderness. Allow me to explain.

We have in our parliamentary democracy something known as representative government. People are represented by their Member of Parliament, who in turn is elected by running in something known as a riding—a tract of land that holds X number of people. Ridings are not based on size, but on population. This is why Metro Toronto has dozens of ridings and Northern Ontario only has three.

Things get sticky, however, whenever the population of the country or province grows. As people move and new residents come to Canada or Ontario, one soon finds that there are now 200,000 people in one riding and 34,000 in another. The way the bureaucrats balance this is by redrawing riding boundaries, so the population statistics for each riding are more even.

Last Thursday, Ontario bureaucrats and politicians got together and redrew a whole bunch of boundaries across this great province. Because of the way those boundaries were redrawn, those of us in Tay Township got what could amount to a very bad deal. (Please note the understatement in the previous line.)

If an election were held today, our candidate would not be the man born with a pin stripe suit on and a pipe in his mouth—Al McLean. No, we would likely get a candidate from Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, or yikes, even Huntsville. Now there is nothing wrong with these communities when one views them as individual entities. However, the bureaucrats and politicians down in Toronto seem to think that Midland, Port and the Harbour belong with Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge on the political map.

One must only conclude that the politicians who voted this boundary change into law were a) illiterate and could not read the bill; b) have never been on vacation and can therefore not read maps; or c) were drunk at the time they were voting.

Our former ally, good old Al McLean, waged some sort of a one man battle over the issue, but his cries were drowned out over

the roar caused by such things as extra-billing and other hot issues of the day.

What in the world do Midland et. al. have in common with Huntsville? Our economies are different. Geographically speaking, we are just slightly closer than Iceland is to Australia.

Further more (huff huff) the bureaucrat with tunnel vision once again saw fit to put Midland and Penetanguishene into different ridings. Yes, folks, Penetang, Elmvale and Orillia were properly linked together and placed into one riding, but Midland got lumped together with the great white north.

What this means is incredibly important to us. First, it will be very difficult for a candidate from Tay Township to be elected to the Legislature. This is because he or she will have to be popular with party members in Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge—something very difficult for someone this far south to accomplish.

Secondly, our MPP, who will likely always hail from those three northern outposts, will place Midland's political concerns after those of Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge. The reason is simple; those three Muskoka towns have somewhat similar economies, fairly close ties, and will therefore likely raise

Carey Nieuwhof

similar concerns.

Midland's economy and interest, however, are far more closely linked with Orillia, Penetang and Barrie. Our MPP from the north will not likely work as closely with the MPPs from Barrie and Orillia and Penetang, simply because his constituents from Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge really don't give a hoot what goes on in Penetang or Orillia.

All of these factors have made Midland and the rest of Tay Township politically important on the provincial level. We will no longer have much sway at Queen's Park because, more often than not, our interests will be voted by the folks up Muskoka way.

Our new riding (titled Muskoka-Georgian Bay, by the way), will be a constant source of frustration and anger for the thinking man in Tay Township. The boundary change was quietly passed into law last Thursday, so there's really not much we can do but grin and bear it.

I suppose we'll have to learn to live like political nobodies and relish the memories of the days when we used to have influence. And to think, all this has been done to accompany population shifts, in the name of democracy. Anyone feel like a revolution?

What about artistic licence?

Last week's absorbing soap opera saw the advantages and disadvantages of the new photo ID which is now a requirement on driving licences. This week's saga is entitled Licences for everyone.

Why not enlarge (no pun intended) the photo idea? Why not photos for all licences? Just think of the endless possibilities when you are required by anybody at anytime to prove either who you are or what you are. A licence for every occasion.

So you pull out your wallet or purse, and in the see-through plastic pockets made for the purpose, here's what you've got.

A fishing licence. There you are trying to carry a giant (stuffed) sturgeon bigger than you, and smiling at the same time. The 29 pockets on your jacket are stuffed also, with lures, hooks, line and weights. Your rod is loaded with four pound breaking strain. Sweat (simulated) drips from your brow.

Any good conservation officer would fall

for this one, hook line and sinker.

A hunting licence against a (backdrop) forest scene in 3D Technicolour. You stand with one foot, left or right depending on preference, on a moose. You appear to be a midged by comparison.

Your trusty bow and arrow (rented) is held casually in the left or right hand. You look grim. Now you explain to the game warden how in real life the deer walked into the back of your pick-up truck, laid itself on the floor, tied both sets of legs itself, and expired, out of season!

A marriage licence. Hey, next to a mortgage, this is the biggest thing in your life. Bride and groom smiling at each other after the service, and on the back, a duly sworn statement by either a civic or religious dignitary that, yes, this is you.

This licence is especially valuable to any couple who try for a last minute reservation in a motel and have the last name of either

Smith, Jones, or Brown.

007 James Bond would not be required to carry anything to show anybody at anytime. Thank you.

A private detective licence. This one is fairly straightforward. It would show the licenced investigator in one of two ways: as photographed through a keyhole, or, looking through a keyhole with ear pressed to the door. No easy feat, if you try it.

A licenced plumber. If this brings visions of pipe wrenches, coveralls, vise, pipes and fittings, no. The photo would bear the legend Registered Licenced Plumber, under which the person is shown quietly working on a press printing his own money.

A licenced chiropractor licence would show the person in medical whites leaning over the padded couch and throwing the patient's back in or out, as the case may be.

The patient, depending on the scenario, would be shown with a grin if the back was

Ray Baker

being thrown back in (no pun intended), or, a grimace if the back was being thrown out.

You see now how everything drops into place? (Pun intended).

A licenced newspaper columnist after five years hard labour, learning the craft, would be shown with pen in hand and the look on his or her face would denote wisdom, compassion, knowledge, inspiration, humility, understanding, and, oh yes, I nearly forgot, modesty.

On second thought, let's leave the photos out of licencing. Then people can take you at face value again.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE: "Natives in Central Amazonia believe that a photograph steals a part of their soul." World Digest

Ray Baker and his family live in Penetanguishene. He is a freelance writer whose editors have removed his photograph from his newspaper column.



Sidewalk food

Letters

Volunteers remember those who forget

Dear Editor,

It is with gratitude, I express my sincere thanks to all The Villa Care Centre nursing home volunteers, The Villa Care nursing home staff, the residents of the Lodge and the community at large, who participated in our Alzheimer's fund raising campaign.

Special thanks to our Volunteer friends at Midland Times, Midland Radio CKMP, CKVR TV Barrie, CKCO TV Kitchener, Georgian Home Bakery, Georgian Bay Community Six (local programming). Their contribution helped to make it first rate. It was a great success!!! Our Seniors and their families had a great day visiting. This function once more offered an opportunity to be involved with the friends of the local community.

Thanks for making this a memorable day for Alzheimer's!

Sincerely,

Lucie Markham
Volunteer Co-ordinator
Villa Care Centre

We invite our readers to express their views on subjects of personal interest.

This newspaper reserves the right to edit all material submitted for space, grammar and legal restrictions.

Please include name, address and phone number of writer with article.

Letters

The Penetanguishene Citizen welcomes Letters to the Editor. They must be legible, signed (in hand), and carry the writer's address and telephone number for verification. Pen names are not allowed and anonymous letters will not be published. Letters published by this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper, its publisher or editor.

Penetanguishene Citizen

Published by Bayweb Limited every Tuesday at
74 Main Street, Penetanguishene, Ontario 549-2012
Second Class Mail Registration Number 2327

Publisher: Andrew Markie
Manager: Judy French
Editor: Michele Couett



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