

Letters

York Board does need information officer, former employee says

Council flip-flops over subdivision

If there was any doubt that politicians make lousy planners, it should have been erased when Richmond Hill council Monday night reversed its position for the second time on whether or not to support a subdivision on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Council had initially been in support of the estate residential subdivision, then decided to oppose it.

The developer's lawyer went to the Ontario Municipal Board. A week-long hearing involving both the town's and the Region of York's legal and planning staff was held and following the hearing, those staff members thought they had a good chance of winning.

Now, Richmond Hill council has attempted to grab defeat from the jaws of victory by instructing its solicitor to write to the Ontario Municipal Board to say they now support the application for development.

Make no mistake about it, the housing to be provided would do nothing to relieve the oppressed masses.

The most obvious form of shelter to be provided is a tax shelter — luxury homes on over-

sized lots. It is true that such homes provide more municipal tax revenue than smaller ones, but they also are less efficient to service with snow ploughs, hydro, telephones, school buses, police cruisers and water.

The land will be needed someday, and the regional policy recognizes this, when the megalopolis gets here, for recreational use. Anyone who doubts it might try to find a spot for a picnic in a Metropolitan Toronto park or a conservation area on a June weekend.

Richmond Hill council, under whatever behind the scenes pressure we will never know, has tried to change its position when the jury is out. Its position is one of contempt for the OMB and to take such a stand without legal advice at this time is gross irresponsibility.

What can council do now? Reverse its stand for the third time? Hardly.

While members of council may hold the OMB in contempt, the OMB can only regard Richmond Hill, thanks to our council, as a joke.

I was pleased to read in your issue of January 24 that the York County Board of Education plans to reinstate the position of Information Officer ("School board wants information officer").

As the person who filled that role with the board for nine years, I know how many people are constantly seeking miscellaneous information about the school system and how very grateful they are to hear someone on the other end of the phone who has the time to listen and wants to help them.

I'm sure that people have had their questions answered during the last year but it must have been by harried administrators who had to let other more important work wait while they researched the answer to some trivial question.

Consider, too, that superintendents and such are much more highly paid than information officers and you will realize that having administrators do this is not the best use of the taxpayers' dollars.

And with all due respect to the overworked press people, I agree with Vaughan Trustee Don Cameron that they have not been able to do a really good job of informing the public about what the board is doing.

There are many reasons for this: first, the

operation of an organization which looks after the needs of 45,000 youngsters and 3,000 staff is necessarily complex.

It takes attendance at several meetings to just get the general drift of what is going on, let alone be able to report it intelligently.

When I was on the job, my phone rang constantly the day after board meetings as reporters called to find out whether motions had been carried or lost, what the implications of reports and studies were, etc.

Helping reporters understand and interpret board business was a large part of my job and one that I enjoyed — I learned so much more

myself that way.

Add to this the fact that newspaper reporters come and go, almost like the seasons, it often seemed to me.

No sooner would I have shepherded a new young reporter along to the stage where he or she knew the trustees from the administrators and the difference between capital and operating expenditures then he would be gone seeking greener fields and I would have a new face at the press table and a new caller the next day, asking, embarrassed, "What did they really do about that...?"

(Board motions, amendments and amendments often confuse trustees as well as administrators, not to mention green young reporters.)

Consider too, that newspapers have more to report on than education. Often a meeting that goes on from 8 p.m. to well after midnight must be reported in one or two brief articles and it is not possible to report all the important issues about which the public should be informed.

When the board's information officer issues a news release, however, not only are the schools and teachers informed about board actions the same week they take place, but members of parent groups and other interested individuals who had asked to be on the mailing list received complete and accurate information about what the board was dealing with.

While it is quite true that trustees are well informed about what they are doing, it is unrealistic to think that they can all be information officers,

as some have said. Certainly a parent who is very much upset by something at the local school will call and talk to a trustee about it but many would like to be informed generally (and with the least effort to themselves) and would seldom or never call a trustee with casual queries.

During the past year, I have each week eagerly scanned the newspapers and have been much disappointed to find so little about the board. I am still a taxpayer in York and I like to know what the board is doing with my money.

I will certainly ask to be put on the news release mailing list, the more so as I now issue releases for the Peel Board of Education and will enjoy making comparisons.

And will someone please tell Trustee Norm Weller not to worry — an information officer needs only about three quarters

of a secretary (preferably one who can spell and punctuate), the camera I used is still safely stored away and should have taken no harm from a year's rest (although the small store of film is probably no longer useable).

The dark room and equipment I used to develop and print my picture are still in existence. I'm sure the information officer won't cost the taxpayers five cents a week each.

One suggestion I would make is that a moratorium of at least three years be put on debate to abolish the post once it is filled.

It really turns people off to have to sit and listen to discussions about whether or not their job should be abolished and they will just look for more security elsewhere.

Margaret McLean, Information Officer, Peel Board of Education

Where's the grand he wants to know

The Liberal, January 24 edition reported under the headline "More Wintario \$\$\$ for York" that the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill will use a grant of \$1,000 to share in the costs of hosting "Heritage Day Festival".

Please tell me more. I'm only the President but I haven't heard of this grant for \$1,000 or that we are celebrating Heritage Day which falls on February 5.

I don't know of anyone in our Society who has accepted a grant of \$1,000

recently or who is planning a celebration for Heritage Day.

People keep telling me I'm out of touch but I never realized I was that far out in left field.

Patrick Trant, President, The Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill.

Lions get bouquets

Kudos to Thornhill Lions.

The community of Thornhill would like to thank publicly our Lions Club for once again providing us all with the opportunity to enjoy daily our Oakbank Pond in winter.

For several years, the Engineering department of the Town has looked after scraping snow, removing it, smoothing the ice surface of our natural skating rink — but only after the equipment had finished in

the Town itself.

As a result, few of us in recent winters could skate with pleasure and confidence morning, afternoon or night.

However, now that the Thornhill Lions Club has undertaken to provide its community with a large, smooth, well-lit ice surface, Thornhill residents can skate at whim, with safety and great pleasure.

Thank you, Thornhill Lions.

From your community

ED. NOTE: The information came from a news release dated January 12, 1979, and said: "The Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill will use a grant of \$1,000 to share in the costs of hosting 'Heritage Day Festival'." The release came from the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, 77 Bloor Street West, Toronto. They refer us to their Information Services Branch, at 965-0615. We suggest you give them a call. We will, too.

Now get out there and have some fun

The 11th Annual Richmond Hill Winter Carnival is in the starting blocks, and the gun will be fired tomorrow evening.

Between then and Sunday, dozens of events to satisfy all tastes and desires will be staged.

A complete list of program events may be found elsewhere in your Liberal this week, but we're looking forward to the skydiving and the pancakes.

One is as thrilling as the other is delicious.

As is usual at this time, The Liberal weather bureau will stick its neck out and predict cold, crisp

weather with just a trace of new snow. (That's about perfect for carnivals, isn't it?)

While the carnival is filled with the usual hoop-la and festivity, its main reason for existence is a psychological one.

It, hopefully, should help you split up your winter; help you overcome the February blahs; help you make it through to April.

Once Carnival time arrives in Richmond Hill, it's easy to say we've broken winter's back.

Now, get out there and have fun

yesterdays

by mary dawson

Did you ever hear of the robbers of Barkham swamp? If you haven't heard the story it is not surprising since they were supposed to have been active in the very early 1800s.

The story of this gang was published in 1886 with the assurance of the author that it was based on fact. It was republished in The Liberal in 1926-7 in serial form. The author was not named.

The gang consisted of The Chief, his mother and sister (Silent Poll), his son The Lifter, Joe Murrey and the Rev. Mr. Jonas (an alias).

The latter would preach at one of the small churches in the area and get himself invited into the homes of wealthy members of the congregation. There he would locate any stores of money and other valuables and would determine the easiest way of entering and leaving.

On receiving this information another member of the gang would pay a late night visit to the home and relieve it of its valuables. On one occasion the Chief was tied up as take by The Lifter was

7,500 pounds sterling and he was able to extract only half of the booty in the gentleman's strong box.

The gang holed up in a dugout headquarters reached by a long tunnel. Held as prisoners were Nancy, a young woman who had been seized on a gang foray and Roland Gray, probably added by the author to increase interest in his story. Gray was captured by the chief as he was fleeing from charges that he had wounded (he thought he had killed) a rival for the hand of his beloved Aster Astor, a beautiful young daughter of a very wealthy man.

Determined to escape and find his way to the United States Gray enlisted the help of Nancy and finally of The Lifter who had second thoughts about a life of crime and wanted to reform.

The gang then abducted Aster and held her for ransom, but Gray, Nancy and The Lifter took her with them in their bid for freedom. She was happy to tell her lover that he had only wounded his opponent in the duel.

Murrey was shot and The Chief was tied up as take by The Lifter was

escape and inform the police of the gang's hideout.

Because of his help The Lifter was allowed to make his way to the United States where he did well as an honest man. The old woman and Silent Poll were caught and sent to prison for life. Murrey was tried and found guilty on several charges, including murder, and was hanged.

But The Chief had freed himself and disappeared by the time the police arrived at the hideaway. He re-established himself with three other desperados in Western Ontario and the fame of his doings spread far and wide.

Nancy was returned to her father and a couple of years later married a farmer. She had four children one of whom was a member of the Ontario Legislature for a time.

Rev. Mr. Jonas was arrested as he conducted a revival service in a church on the Don. He was tried under his real name of Jud Sykes, convicted and hanged. As for our hero, Roland Gray, he married his beloved Aster and her father turned over a large part of his wealth to the newlyweds.

I have decided that I would like to be rich.

I'm not talking about a paltry million or so . . . I mean rich, rich . . . big numbers . . . no worries and all that stuff.

Since my pal Millie Stewart is busy dreaming in the column below this one, I figured I might just as well rave on about some lunatic idea I have had running through my head, too.

Just in case the boss is reading this, I want to state at the outset that if I ever came into a whole wad of moolah, I doubt if I would entertain the idea of quitting CKEY. It's just too much fun.

Having ensured my continued employment, I might as well ponder on what it would be like to be rich.

To be rich would mean not having to worry about paying the gas and hydro bills and wondering if the VISA account is over its limit.

Having unlimited funds would give me the pick of the world for vacations and going first class all the way.

My bar would be well stocked and Wonderful Ronnie Wallace could have his choice of any liquid libation he may desire . . . except my property would be surrounded by one of those neat wrought iron fences with a big gate to keep him away from the bar.

ASKUNK ? I would own some horses for the girls to ride and I would buy a skunk. I've always wanted a skunk.

I would have an architect design a great monstrosity of a house with a whole lot of hidden passageways and walls that turn around at the touch of a button.

Running throughout the castle would be the world's largest model train layout for me to play with. (Me, too — Editor).

The driveway would be heated and I would have a good laugh every time the snow fell.

I wouldn't have servants because our family functions together quite nicely and I feel that live-in help would make

us uncomfortable, but I would make sure that my wife doesn't have to load another washer or iron another shirt. I'd bring in a housekeeper.

I would like to own the following cars: a '56 Thunderbird; a BMW; a Jeep Wagoneer; and a Lincoln Versailles.

The T-Bird would be for my own amusement; the BMW for my wife; the Wagoneer for bad weather and the Versailles for parking near the gate.

The pool would, of course be enclosed. The roof and walls would have to be able to open for the good weather and I would have a really neat waterfall right beside the bar.

ELECTRONICS

The house would be crammed full of all sorts of electronic goodies. There would be a color TV in every room, each with its own video recorder.

The theatre would have top notch projection equipment and no NO-SMOKING AREA. The stereo system would be a foundation shaker and all of

the lighting would be dimmer controlled.

The kitchen would be gigantic and my wife would have the latest toys along with her favorite cast iron pans.

Since I love fresh orange juice, I would install one of those nifty machines that you see in the malls that cut, squeeze and discard the delightful fruit.

There would be hanging plants everywhere.

I could go on and on about this but, if the truth were to be known, I haven't the faintest idea what I would do if someone dumped a bundle on me, except yell at the top of my lungs.

Anyway, it's February and we still haven't got a holiday from Ottawa and my car was in an accident last week, and . . .

The Ol' Millpond Philosopher said, "Smile, you could be in Uganda."

LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

"Operation tropics" is escape from winter

By MILLIE STEWART

February is only one week old and already people are wishing it at the back of beyond.

I'm all for that idea, because I hate winter and most of all, I hate February.

Nothing frustrates me more than watching all my friends, planning southern vacations.

Hearing their vacation plans and admiring wardrobes of skimpy shorts, tops and swimsuits is enough to turn me into a stowaway.

Last February, two of my fellow workers delivered the ultimate in insults . . . Ron Wallace, our illustrious great leader and Bob Rice, our flying columnist, took off from Toronto on a bitterly cold morning to spend an afternoon at Montego Bay in Jamaica.

They only managed to have two hours and 47 minutes on the sunny beach, but it was enough to make my eyes green.

This year, my best friend and her husband are delivering the low blow.

In ten days time, she will be flitting along the golden beaches of Antigua clad only in a skimpy bikini, while I will still be faced with snow drifts, stalled cars, kids with the sniffles and with my luck,

February's traditional ice onslaught.

Life is so unfair. It really is.

A SOLUTION The time has come to take drastic measures about February.

Nothing is better for a girl's morale than a new hairdo, so off I went to my favorite hairdresser's.

I placed myself in her capable hands and now I'm a new woman. Something new to wear would certainly boost the dragging spirits, thought I, so always wanting to own a skimpy white bikini, I bought one.

A sun lamp will turn my pallid winter complexion into one of golden glory, and then I will be all set for "Operation Tropics".

To accomplish my imaginary holiday, I will need the assistance of some of my friends, but when they hear my great plan, they will just clamor to join me.

To get to any tropical island, it is necessary to fly, unless you plan to swim.

That is no problem, at all. I will talk nicely to Bob Rice and if I offer to let him join in the fun, I'm sure he will agree to be my private pilot.

Setting the scene might be a bit tricky, but I have a friend with an

indoor pool, who I'm positive would just love to oblige.

First he will need to spread liberal amounts of soft, golden sand around his pool.

TROPICAL PLANTS To add to the tropical atmosphere, some sweet smelling tropical plants would have to be placed here and there along my sandy beach.

Climate is very important. I'm not going to invent a tropical paradise so I can freeze.

The water temperature and that of the air around it would definitely have to be raised . . . 80 degrees ought to be about right.

I realize this would just wreck his hydro bill, but it's only money, and anyway, money has no place in my dream.

After we have had our fill of lazing on the beach and wallowing in the tropical seas, it will be time to break open a bottle of something appropriate like coconut rum and with a tall pitcher of orange juice and plenty of ice, the scene will be perfect.

It all sounds just perfect, doesn't it? But this is where my dream can take a real beating.

Swimming in an indoor pool is quite acceptable in any weather, but

who in their right mind wants to sit around that pool quaffing back ice cold drinks, when just feet away there is a blazing fire and a plentiful supply of hot mulled cider or some other such warming libation.

Aw heck . . . why does every one of my dreams have to be spoiled by reality? Like I said earlier, life is so unfair.

If I can't have my dream, I will run down to the zoo and visit the warm pavilions just to get the feel of heat.

WINTER FUN

For you lovers of winter, there is plenty going on. This is Winter Carnival weekend in Richmond Hill and fun and frolicking will abound at the Mill Pond.

All I ask is that you think of me . . . the winter hater.

My kids love winter, and I am expected to put on a good show of liking it for their sake. And I will.

If you happen to see a lady gliding merrily across the Mill Pond with egg on her face, it will be me.

Actually, deep down inside, I guess I do like winter, but it would be so nice to get away from it even for a week, or even for a dream.

By the way, friends, have a super holiday.