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## Brilliant ideas

Have you ever had an idea that you thought was so utterly brilliant that it couldn't possibly fail? And then when it did fail, you shook your head in confusion, wondering what went wrong and what you could have done to change the outcome.

Everyone has had a moment (or two) like that. Frequently common sense or sage advice from others prevents us from taking the final fatal leap. But sometimes we forge ahead hoping that the benefits outweigh the risks and everything turns out fine.

### editorial

*laurie brett*

That's sort of what happened with our

"Question of the Week" that ran from September 6 to November 1.

In early September we decided to make an attempt at connecting with our readers in a new way. Being keen readers of weekly community newspapers from near and far, we observed that some papers try to reach out to their readers by posing a question of the week. With close to 5,000 visitors to our website each week, we thought we could capitalize on the Web traffic to ensure ongoing responses to our new, interactive feature.

Initially, momentum was slow. Staff reporter Dan Schwab used a "man on the street" technique to gather responses from sometimes-reluctant passersby. He questioned folks about the new arena design and how to replace lost Bingo revenues. He asked local shoppers what the pressing election issues were and whether they planned to vote. Responses trickled in.

Then we asked how people felt about politicians and municipal administrators using credit cards for town business. Opinions were strong on this issue and Dan didn't have to do much legwork.

The question that garnered the best response – three weeks' worth of responses – concerned downtown Essex and what could be done to attract new businesses. Writers identified beautification and clean-up projects, better traffic control, and increased residential development as some of the things that might help to attract new businesses. We may not have strong opinions on every issue, but this one certainly stimulates a great deal of concern from local residents.

Our final question asked why Essex is a great place to live. It attracted one response.

We want to thank everyone who responded to our "Question of the Week", either by speaking with Dan in person or by sending an email. We believe that public involvement in community news is very important. For now, however, we've decided to take a break. It would be cruel to send Dan out on the street in the wet, cold and blustery weather we've been having. And anyways, new ideas are percolating here at the Free Press. Brilliant ideas! Ones that can't possibly fail!



The great race ended in Montreal last weekend. Stéphane Dion came from behind to defeat frontrunner Michael Ignatieff and former Ontario Premier Bob Rae.

As the convention week rolled along, you could feel the Dion bandwagon start to pick up steam. He had the one item in his arsenal the others didn't – an ally with lots of delegate votes to throw his way. How a few months can change the landscape of Canadian politics! Gerard Kennedy went from Ontario education minister to king maker, and possibly secured himself a key cabinet position if Stéphane Dion wins the next election.

Bob Rae in the position of national Liberal leader was somehow just not plausible. Rae served in the House of Commons for a few years as a fiery New Democrat MP before moving to provincial politics and brought the NDP to power in Ontario in 1990. Alas, Bob got the top job at the beginning of a deep recession and only lasted



### opinion

*bill gay*

one term.

Michael Ignatieff, an intellectual who looked out of place shaking hands in shopping malls, had views more in common with the Conservatives, the arch villains the new Liberal leader is supposed to dis-patch.

Thus the Liberal party elected another chief from Quebec who, if elected, will be the sixth prime minister from that province since the Second World War. St. Laurent, Trudeau, Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin and Dion?

Marlene Jennings, the Montreal area MP who gained TV attention during the convention as the chief apologist for previous Grit

shortcomings, dubbed Dion and company the "dream team", despite the fact the team will probably be the same as the one Paul Martin failed to captain to the goal line in two elections.

Look for Rae to return to private life and Ignatieff to grab a plum academic assignment, possibly at an Ivy League school. Even if they join Dion's dream team, their roles will be outside the circle of real power in a Liberal party now centred upon the new leader.

I believe Canadians want to see some co-operation between the federal parties and some real results before the next vote. On many issues there is enough common ground between them with credit for all to share. For instance, the bill giving the québécois their cherished designation as a "nation" within Canada drew support from all four parties. The polls will probably show precious little public sentiment for a vote before the spring of 2008.



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