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Truth or consequences

Sometimes it's hard to arrive at an opinion on matters, but three stories in this edition of the Free Press give pause for thought.

It's difficult to know what to think of the Ontario Securities Commission's decision to investigate Sulja Bros. Building Supply Ltd. of Harrow (see Andy Comber's article on page 6). The OSC alleges that the lumber supply yard is involved in a complex matter surrounding the purchase and sale of penny stocks – a practice that can be quite lucrative but not without risk.

free press

editorial

laurie brett

One party named in the OSC statement of

allegations is Kore International Management Inc., the financial management company that made local news in October when it announced funding for the construction of a \$1-million Kronk boxing gym in Colchester.

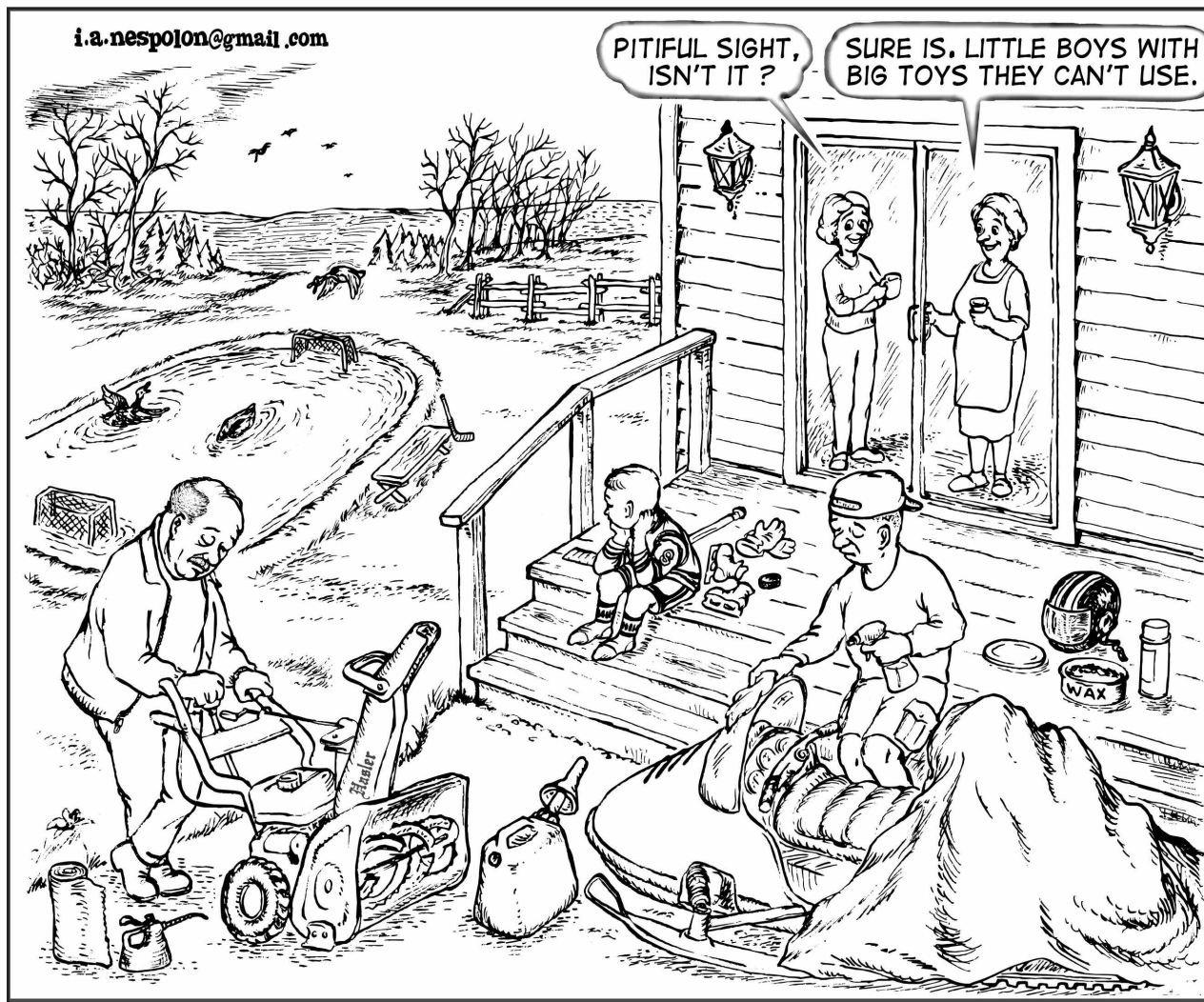
Without delving into any of the finer nuances, you have to wonder what it all means for Colchester where so much is riding on commercial development and tourism. Does an unfavourable decision by the OSC herald the end of the dream or will all gloves come off in an attempt to push local development projects forward? Is the will to survive enough in the face of such a setback?

The will to survive and steel-plated walls for your home appear to be necessary in some parts of Essex (see Andy Comber's front page story), as a New Year's Day shooting makes you wonder if we are collectively labouring under a false sense of security in our sleepy bedroom community. How exactly can we protect ourselves from this style of home invasion?

If thoughts of punitive measures aren't already popping into your mind, you might want to read Dan Schwab's article on the year-long suspensions handed down by the Ontario Hockey Association last Friday to Essex 73's head coach Tony Piroski and assistant coach Lee Jones. Apparently shouting at the referee will now earn you a punishment that far exceeds the crime. Unless the circumstances are aggravated by violence, shouldn't the punishment fit the crime?

Actions can have unintended consequences. And sometimes consequences can slip into our homes and into our lives with seemingly little connection to what happened beforehand. Robert Burns, the famous Scottish poet, once wrote a poem about a farmer that unintentionally destroys the home of a mouse while plowing a field. The mouse, of course, could do little to protect itself against a plow, and sometimes it is worth remembering the poet's point that unreasonable things can happen even when burrowed in what seems to be a safe place. Or, as Burns put it:

*The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,
Gang aft agley*



Federal election talk is in the air. The national media longs for a vote. Some politicians act like they do. But nobody actually wants to march weary Canadians back to the ballot box in 2007. For one thing, polls show little change from the most recent election, so it could well be tax dollars spent in vain. Ontario and Quebec are set for provincial elections this year and both major federal parties have a stake in the outcome. In particular, Stephen Harper's government will move heaven and earth to help former PC leader and now Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest. Similarly in Ontario the provincial PC's performance in the Greater Toronto Area will give their federal cousins a guide on how far they have to go to win ridings in that key area.

The Liberals may also prefer to see a federal election delayed to give them time to showcase their new leader, Stéphane Dion. Outside his home province of Quebec and some pock-

ets in the west, Dion is not so well known. A strong performance in the House of Commons, with time to organize a major league



opinion

bill gay

campaign (raising money), would give Dion his best opportunity to topple the Tories. Good things sometimes take time.

The New Democratic Party, with 29 seats in the present parliament, wants no part of an election. With Mississauga Streetsville MP Wajid Khan crossing the floor to sit with the Tories, the government needs only Jack Layton's forces to hold onto power. Khan, a former Pakistani fighter

pilot, had been acting as Harper's special advisor on Middle East and Afghan affairs. That was too much for Stéphane Dion who not so subtly suggested Khan make his choice. Watch for Layton and company, in co-operation with new Environment Minister John Baird, to set government environmental policy. The New Democrats need lots of credit in the public eye for doing that in order to fend off the challenge being mounted from their left by the Green Party. The Greens, by the way, caused a stir by capturing 26 percent of the vote in the recent London by-election.

And, of course, the Conservative government needs to polish its record on a wide range of issues before meeting the electorate. They are troubled by their drop in the Quebec polls of late, after a splendid showing there last time out. Including their own dozen seats, Harper's Quebec team finished second in 35 other ridings. Let the games begin!



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