

OPINION

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Vote for Canada's future

Canadians voted no to Meech Lake and no on the constitutional referendum, both of which would have blocked the Bloc effectively.

Bloc power is probably overestimated, but its existence at all is due to the window presented by recent history.

Clyde Wells, once the hero of English Canada for his stance against Meech Lake palls. He came to Markham this week to offer a boost to the Markham Stouffville Riding Liberal candidate Jag Bhaduria - a dubious



Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

advantage as Oct. 25 looms.

Isn't it ironic that Jean Chretien is popular everywhere but in Quebec, that English Canada can embrace a federal Quebecer with more warmth than it could either Meech or the referendum?

Yet had the up and coming Jean Charest won the PC leadership, he would likely have been spurned.

We're a weird breed of cat we Canadians.

We sit on the threshold of history. The next five years will be dynamic ones bringing sweeping world changes.

Yet petty partisan positions threaten to break the fault line clean away.

Reform and Bloc voters will change Canada radically if they follow through with their get-even strategy.

Must we lose our country before we know what we had? Lucien Bouchard was caught in the national television debate admitting that he enjoys Canada's good reputation when abroad.

When you mark your ballot Monday make sure you'll be proud to tell your grandchildren the part you played in history.

Education is parents' job first

Dear Editor,

As taxpayers and parents in the '90s, we are very much into accountability. How are the tax dollars being spent? Do our children get pushed through the system without learning the basic skills? We want value for our dollar, and are always measuring others. It keeps people on their toes.

It has occurred to me that we are overlooking the accountability of perhaps the most important group of people, when it comes to children and education: Parents.

Parents are not doing their job of preparing their children for school. If they don't know it is their job, maybe they should learn about it. Are parents aware that a child's peak learning years are from birth to five, the pre-school years. I am amazed when I encounter children in Kindergarten who cannot recognize numbers, or letters of the alphabet. So many children are not being stimulated by their first teachers, mom and dad. Counting and letter recognition are learned by simple games at home; reading books, singing songs, pointing to everyday words printed around the house, fetching the correct number of forks and knives to set the kitchen table. These simple tasks, when reinforced at home, every day, produce a solid grounding for a child to enter school and jump into learning.

When presenting safety programs for Block Parents in our local school, I always ask the Kindergarten children how they would ask for help if they were lost. Could they tell a police offi-

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cer their full name, telephone number and street address? Most children can't. Many don't know their last name and haven't a clue about the street they live on. This is shameful neglect on the part of the parents. Unless there is a severe learning disability, all Kindergarten children can learn these simple things at home.

Neither of my parents went to high school, yet I knew numbers, letters and printing all before I entered school. It doesn't take special talent to sit for a few moments with a child, talking about life-essential skills. Turn off the TV and relax for five minutes with the beautiful children you chose to have.

Yes, we must insist on accountability in all levels of education. Let's get tough on parenting as the first, and most important stage of the learning process. It's smart to begin at the beginning.

Susan Lyons
Unionville



A tale of two cities, each with an attitude



Basic Black

Arthur Black

This is a story about two human settlements. One of them is called Astakos. It's in Greece.

The other one is known as Hogtown, Zurich-On-The-Humber, the Queen's City, Taranna The Good - or just Toronto.

I don't know a whole lot about the settlement called Astakos. It's not listed in my World Atlas, so I figure it's safe to assume that it's smaller than Toronto.

In some ways, at any rate.

As for the other settlement, I know a fair bit about that one. I was born there, for one thing. And in the half a century since I have called it home from time to time. Worked there. Studied there. Got married and divorced and hired and fired and drunk and happy and sad there.

I don't live in Toronto any more and I never will again. But I still hop an eastbound Gray Coach bus three times a week. A bus that crawls in along Toronto's Lakeshore underbelly to deposit me in the bowels of the burg, there to grub for my paycheque.

So I have my own hard-earned opinions about Toronto - but then, breathes there a Canuck from the Queen Charlottes to Signal Hill who doesn't? We all know what we think about Ontario's capital. And generally speaking, the farther away you live, the less edifying the sentiments.

It's an easy city to dislike. Toronto doesn't have the easy beauty of Vancouver or the joie de vivre of Montreal. It lacks the architectural grace of Ottawa, the mountainscape backdrop of Calgary, the down home warmth of a St. John's, a Winnipeg or a Windsor. To the outsider, Toronto feels fast and brittle and cold and more than a touch arrogant.

Toronto feels like it is about money.

Or perhaps even less. After all, Las Vegas is about money too, but at least people enjoy themselves there. Torontonians seldom look like they're having a good time.

Torontonians don't take easily to new cultural concepts either. Remember The Archer? It's a sculpture created by the late great Henry Moore.

A vast, shining nugget of burnished bronze that glows and catches the sun in Nathan Phillips Square. Moore wanted

so badly to see it standing in front of Toronto's New City Hall that he slashed the price to a bargain basement \$100,000.

Torontonians freaked out.

What is it, they squawked. Looks like a chicken with its head cut off. Can't tell the front from the back. One city councillor grumbled "How much art and culture... can we have shoved down our throats?"

Well, that was more than a quarter of a century ago, and Toronto has more or less grown grudgingly accustomed to that stunning bronze brooch pinned to its bosom. It isn't loved. It just isn't talked about any more.

Instead they're talking about The Rock.

The Rock is a massive slab of Muskoka granite that's being installed in a downtown park. Once again Torontonians are bleating about the extravagance of featuring something as unproductive as Precambrian stone when the space could be used to make money - another parking lot, say... or maybe a McDonald's.

And if it must be a damned park, then, as city councillor Tom Jacobek imaginatively suggested "What's wrong with simply laying some sod and planting a few bushes?"

Ah, yes. That's the Toronto we've all come to know and loathe.

Which brings us full circle, to the Greek settlement of Astakos, Greece, that I mentioned way back at the beginning.

Do you know what they do in Astakos?

Every time there's a rainbow in the sky, the city fathers serve free glasses of wine to everybody in the town square.

I don't know how Astakos wracks up against Toronto in other respects - garbage pickup, sewers and sidewalks, public transportation...

But I know which town I'd rather be having dinner in tonight.

Adam

