

STOUFFVILLE

Election call will be soon

Stouffville Tribune

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Comment

The election of David Marquis this past weekend by the local Liberals rounds out the field for the upcoming provincial election.

MPP Larry O'Connor will face both Marquis and PC candidate Julia Munro in the race to represent this riding.

That election call will, we predict, be mere days away. Premier Bob Rae was all winks and nudges when asked the question at the recent hockey match between the Legiskaters and the doctors in Uxbridge. But his presence in this riding twice in two weeks (he will be in Mt.

Our View

Albert (this week) signals both his understanding of the importance of this area to his re-election chances and his imminent calling of an election for Ontario. In helping to launch O'Connor's bid for re-election, Rae is putting in place the common political practice of making the riding rounds just before the election call.

He will want to capitalize on his appearances while they are fresh in the minds of the constituents. Give it a couple of weeks, and we will almost cer-

tainly see the call coming to go to the polls.

And now that the candidates are in place in Durham-York, we will soon begin to see the drive by all parties.

It is important to listen to all sides on the provincial spectrum to make an educated and well-thought out voting decision.

Ontario is facing some of its biggest crises in its history, and this riding is on a fulcrum of change.

We all must ensure that we are informed voters, and make the best choice, when the time comes.



Important lessons learned

When I was a kid, I hid mine in the family Bible.

Actually, my cigarettes were quite safe tucked away in the good book. Nobody stole them.

Yes, my Sweat Caps got a little flat. What to heck - God and I didn't mind. After all, God was God and I was a kid.

Last week, in the name of research for a story, I accompanied two teens to 25 stores. The mission was to see if the kids could buy cigarettes.

The teenagers managed to score smokes in a total of 10 stores in Uxbridge and Stouffville.

That means about 40 per cent of the local merchants willingly sold cigarettes to the minors in direct contravention of the law known as the Tobacco Control Act.

The legislation, making it illegal to sell or give tobacco products to anyone under 19 years, went into effect in November.

Doing the research was an eye-opener. As a bonus, I got an ear full when the retailers found out they'd been set up.

I was charged with being sneaky. I stand before you, guilty as charged. Actually,

I've dedicated much of my time to sneaking around. While I'm at it, I might as well confess: I'm nosy. You might as well know the rest: I'm a snitch.

After I watched 10 stores break the law, I told the world.

I carry no guilt. I'm a journalist. I have a funny way of looking at things. I think people have a right to know if the Tobacco Control Act is working in their community.

This little survey simply gives the community yet another peek at itself. It just lets you look at reality. I ask you: Does it hurt to look at the truth once in a while?

When it comes to teenagers getting hold of cigarettes, Stouffville and Uxbridge is average.

According to David Mair, associate director of the Canadian Council on Smoking and Health, Stouffville and Uxbridge are no better and no worse than any community in Canada. A 40-per cent failure rate is about what officials expect, said Mair.

The Tobacco Control Act has been on the books for six



months. Teaching 23,000 tobacco retailers about the law is quite a job. Few of us would disagree: It's a job worth doing.

Teen smoking is on the rise. The jury on smoking is no longer out. Smoking kills. If this little survey helps even one retailer be more mindful when it comes to selling cigarettes to kids, it's worth it.

If a retailer sells cigarettes to a minor and then calls me and yells foul, I can't take it too seriously.

I enjoyed being a self-appointed cop. Also, my partners did a fine job. While I often accuse today's teenagers of being dull, this does not apply to these two. They've got spunk. And, they're smart enough not to smoke.

The experience reminded me that at times, human nature can be silly. One law

breaker suggested I give him a break and not include the store name in the story. I wasn't impressed.

One merchant sold the smokes to a minor and then accused me of making him look bad in the eyes of the public. While he was hopping mad, he didn't say anything I haven't heard before. It only goes to prove that the game of shoot the messenger is still played.

However, generally speaking, the retailers who did sell the cigarettes to the minor reacted in a mature and responsible manner when called for comment.

Most were sincere in their regrets that minors were sold cigarettes in their stores.

One merchant in particular is taking extra measures to make sure cigarettes are not sold to minors in the future. I have no doubt: the manager of the IGA store in Uxbridge will keep his eyes and ears open. This store manager impressed me.

I had a chuckle or two while doing this story. At a Stouffville store, I wasn't the only one watching as the teenager bought cigarettes.

A York Regional Police officer also witnessed the purchase.

At another store, two clerks bent over backwards to serve the minor. They searched the store to find the right brand.

At one spot, a lady from the old school didn't mince words in refusing to hand over any cigarettes.

The teen was reminded of the importance of telling the truth. You can fool cops but you cannot fool the lady who works in the IGG station on Hwy 47.

Apologies for any incompetence

While four-fifths of the Gilderdale household variously skied, swam, read, partied and slept in New Hampshire, our lonely feline spent his March break at the vet's, being divested of his masculinity.

Of late, it was clear that Qmoknl had been looking for someone to love. His desire for female companionship was particularly acute at around 3 a.m., when he would awaken the entire household with a mournful caterwaul, no doubt his equivalent of a Nine Inch Nails ditty of deprivation.

I felt guilty, leaving him to face the unkindest cut of all on his own.

No familiar visitors to his bedside after the chop, no upholstery on which to exact his revenge.

I needn't have worried, he was back with us, more cuddly (but happily less vocal) than ever, the following Monday.

My own return to the fold, after two decadent holidays in three weeks, was a less positive experience. In my frenzied, last-minute attempts to organize packing, unpacking and food for the troops during my absence, I neglected to re-schedule my son's guitar lessons to accommodate his driver's ed program.

Then the orthodontist's office phoned to advise us that my daughter had missed her appointment. In light of such overwhelming evidence, I was forced to admit to myself that the only reason I am indispensable to my nearest and dearest is that I am disorganized to the point of chaos.

Although I know when things are meant to happen, I keep the inventory in my head instead of writing it on the calendar. If I died tomorrow, the secrets of my families' next six months' activities and appointments would go



with me to the grave. When you're a famous writer, it's perfectly acceptable to enjoy a rich intellectual existence while ignoring the annoying obligations of everyday life. That's because you can afford to reimburse people for the inconvenience you have occasioned them.

When you're me, you spend a lot of time apologizing for your incompetence.

And such wasted time, as the legion of experts which runs the world in the 1990s is only too eager to point out, could be far more gainfully employed in making more money for myself, thus providing the wherewithal for the necessary self-improvement program.

There are those who are willing to be improved but it's not something I would seriously consider. Deep down inside, I like myself in spite of my glaring faults, and we all know nothing is guaranteed to make an expert gush more effusively than a well-developed self-esteem.

True, my life expectancy may be somewhat reduced by a lack of focus, exercise and oat bran. Conversely, a healthy self-image and a realistic view of my limitations could save me from the stress which is the lot of the Type A personality and which can lead to other, equally lethal, diseases.

If my line of reasoning is faulty, I won't be around to argue the point. Meanwhile, I shall continue to enjoy life in my own inappropriate way, providing a perfect example of wrong-headedness for the virtuous and sensible.

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