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EDITORIAL

Share spirit of season

The spirit of the season is alive and well in our community.

Businesses and individuals are showing generosity and caring for their less-fortunate neighbours. And there are many ways you can support them to ensure everyone has a happier holiday.

First and most familiar, the local food bank needs contributions to stave off hunger pangs for those having trouble putting food on the table.

The usual items are needed; canned foods like fish, beans, tomato sauce, juices, and carbohydrates such as pastas and cereals. Then there are items such as diapers, baby formula or cleaning supplies which certain families really appreciate.

If you're unsure what items are needed or where to drop them off, contact the food bank.

There are community dinners, visitations or performances to cheer up the sick in hospitals and lonely in nursing homes, and coat and clothing drives going on in every community right now.

Church and community groups are reaching out in many ways to brighten the lives of the less-fortunate in their towns.

Whether you drop some money into the kettles of the Salvation Army or organize your office food or clothing drive, the spirit of the holiday season will not only help others, but warm your heart as well.



Truth is first casualty of mega election

When one heavy hitter calls another heavy hitter a liar, it's summersault time on the political stage.

While Toronto's mega mayor would like us all to believe that hell has no fury like a Lastman scorned, I'm not buying it. It looks like business as usual to me — the same old shameless theatrics on the political stage.

One of the realities of life in the GTA today is: people who live in Stouffville and Uxbridge should pay close attention to what goes on in the new mega city. Remember: If we learn from the



Off the Record

Joan Ransberry

mistakes of others, it's a gift, of sorts. While mayoralty candidates in Stouffville and Uxbridge ran dull, pay-as-we-go style campaigns, Toronto's quest for votes was, indeed, different. The mega city campaign had life. It had colour. It was the one to watch.

You have to admit: Mel Lastman's spunky, spirited "no-tax hike" campaign worked. He walloped opponent Barbara Hall.

Then reality came knocking. Last weekend, we learned Lastman's election platform is dead before he even takes office.

When Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves released the province's figures for the costs of transferring responsibilities, Nooooo-Body noticed more than Lastman: Toronto's been told to take a \$163-million hit.

The figures not only prevent Lastman from delivering on his "tax freeze" promise, but the average taxpayer in Toronto could see a 10-per cent tax hike or about \$500 added to each tax bill.

Since all's fair in love and war and elections, Lastman didn't blink when he made the "no-tax hike" promise. He didn't let the fact that the provincial figures weren't in yet get in the way of his election bid.

If ever a politician should have egg on his face, it's Lastman. Yet, because he's Lastman, his face is clean as a whistle. On Friday, Lastman reminded the voters that not only is he blameless, but that they picked a leader with guts.

Yes, siceeeeee, Lastman dropped the gloves and told the province he's not taking the hit lying down. The tough Bad Boy pointed his finger at the TV cameras and called Ontario Premier Mike Harris a liar. After which he said, "You screwed Toronto, Mr. Premier, you are cutting the heart out of the city."

I'd like to have been a fly on the wall at Barbara Hall's house on the weekend. Harris kept insisting the provincial downloading would be revenue neutral, but Hall didn't bank on it. She didn't promise the moon, she ran a reality campaign.

Of course, she lost the election. It appears the first casualty in the mega city's first election was the truth.

If Eves' figures are the real figures, residents of York Region won't have to sell the farm to pay the taxes.

The "revenue neutral" deal means Durham has to shave \$10 million from its budget and York Region will likely break even. In Stouffville, Mayor Wayne Emmerson, facing a possible \$118,000 shortfall, said he's still keeping Harris to his "revenue neutral" word. There's one sure thing: Lastman is a hard act to follow.

There's no dust under OUR tree

Just when I thought pre-Christmas panic had reached its zenith at Chateau Gilderdale, we had the ducts cleaned.

Inspired by a dust ball the size of Mars wafting through the west wing on a recent weekend, Mr. Wallethead had no trouble deciding who he was gonna call. Dustbusters arrived bright and early last Thursday and by 10 o'clock, the old homestead was a dead ringer for the set of Alien V.

Pipes and tubes snaked their way up and down stairs and into sundry rooms, hissing and puffing ominously as they sucked up the motley accumulation of grime, Lego, paper clips, jewellery and unidentifiable, well-chewed objects introduced to the heating system by Poc and Spasm and their feline forebears.

Nice though it was to have the place pristine, the process took all day and exacted its toll on the emotional stability of yours truly, whose idea of the perfect working environment is one of solitude and silence. Indications that the day was doomed came at 8 a.m., even before the cleaning truck was in the driveway, via the insistent warble of



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

the telephone. "Hello?" I said, as brightly as I could, given the hour. The headset emitted an ear-splitting beep, indicating that the fax machine at the other end was under the mistaken impression it was interfacing with another of its ilk. Oh, well, I thought, we all make mistakes.

Six calls and half an hour later, my bonhomie had suffered an irreversible decline. Armed with my tormentor's number, I called Bell Canada for help. They consulted their electronic oracle and promised to contact the perpetrator and tell him, her or it to cease and desist.

By now Ductman had set up his mother ship in the living room and was en route to my office bearing a length of tubing to sluice out the vent. What had previously been a dull rumble turned into a deafening roar as I tried

in vain to continue conversing with the person on the other end of the phone.

Eventually I shut myself in the washroom with phone, notebook and pencil and concluded my interview seated inelegantly upon the throne. At 4:30 p.m. I called Clare (she was babysitting) and she made the mistake of asking how I was. From my incoherent babblings, she figured I was in a certain amount of distress.

Her suggestion, "Let's go shopping," was music to the ears of this closet Valley Girl, particularly since I had so far failed to buy so much as one stocking stuffer. By the time we got home, I was beginning to feel a faint stirring of Christmas cheer.

Ductman was packing up at the end of a long day. The amount of dust that had changed hands would probably be eligible for an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records. He did a great job, but you have to wonder if it was all worth it.

As Joan Rivers said, "I hate housework. You make the beds, you do the dishes, and six months later you have to start all over again!"

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Patricia Pappas
Publisher

Andrew Mair
Editor-In-Chief
Tracy Kibble
Editor

Debra Weller
Director of Advertising
Mike Rogerson
Retail Advertising Manager
Stacey Allen
Classified Manager

Barry Goodyear
Director of Distribution

Vivian O'Neil
Business Manager

Pamela Nichols
Operations Manager

about us

News (905) 640-2100
Retail sales (905) 640-2100
Classifieds (905) 640-2874
Distribution (905) 640-2100
Fax (905) 640-5477
E-Mail thetrib@istar.ca
6244 Main St.,
Stouffville, Ont.
L4A 1E2

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