

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Political candidates open to scrutiny

It has often been said of elections that if people would simply vote for the best candidate, regardless of the party they represent, we would have an excellent government made up of quality individuals.

However, that pretty much seems to be a fantasy as we head into the provincial election on June 3.

The backroom movers and shakers who call the shots for the political parties in this province would hate the idea of candidates being judged only on their individual merits.

Far too many politicians simply ride the coattails of their party. And that's the way the parties want it.

Too many voters want to turn elections into popularity contests between the leaders.

Sadly, a good portion of the media also seems to fall into this trap. Elections seem to be covered more like sporting events, with a day's analysis of how each leader fared on the campaign trail.

Again, this is exactly the sort of non-issue campaign which party organizers love. It directs all the attention onto the leaders, relegating government policies to the position of afterthought.

Of course, the party leader defines where the government will stand and how it will lead. What voters should also consider, though, is how their representative will perform as part of the government.

As an intelligent voter, you should be looking into the candidates who want to represent your interests at Queen's Park.

What do you know about the candidates in your riding? How available are they to answer to your questions?

It's guaranteed that a politician who is hard to get hold of during an election campaign, when their profile and accessibility should be at its highest, will be impossible to find once they have been voted in.

Residents also have the right to ask candidates tough questions.

If a politician, or one of their representatives comes to your door, they are inviting a debate on themselves and their political positions.

You should welcome the opportunity. It may be the only chance you truly get to express your opinions and concerns.

Don't let that politician run off to the next door after handing over some brochures. Ask them about the issues you care about.

And don't just take the partyline as an answer. Provincial politicians are well paid. The money they get is yours. They work for you. Don't forget it.

Consider this election as a job interview by the candidates. And you're the boss.

Most importantly of all, though, remember to vote. We are a free and democratic country. We must never take that for granted.

Voting is your right. Use it.

CHEERS & JEERS

■ **CHEERS:** To local McDonald's restaurants and other area businesses which supported the Angelina Mullings Trust Fund. On Mother's Day, the restaurants in Markham collected money for Mullings, who lost her husband in a tragic car accident in Stouffville earlier this year.

■ **JEERS:** To Ontario's Drive Clean program, which is coming under increasing criticism from motorists. Frustrated drivers are giving a clear thumbs down to the initiative. While the idea of protecting the environment by cleaning up polluting cars is the right one, the implementation of Drive Clean is obviously leading to abuses by some unscrupulous businesses.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Council's actions leave resident in state of shock

As I write this I am still in shock after the May 4 council meeting.

I was dismayed to see our council (with the exception of councillor Steve Pliakes) shift from a democratic format to an autocratic format ignoring any and all input from the public.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson made comment towards the possible amalgamation of Markham and Stouffville. Could this mean that the South Park complex is in actuality a new pool and library for the residents of Markham?

If so, maybe they should pay for it. In the last 16 years that I have been of voting age I have never had a true political affiliation.

After seeing the autocratic behaviour of council over the last several months I believe the Reform party had it right when they ran on a platform of recall legislation.

If this were the case today, then councillor Sue Sherban, who is my councillor, would have been recalled and been forced to justify her actions to the 80 per cent of her constituents who are against the South Park project.

It is sad to say but our political process is no longer democratic. A book could probably be written about the rise and fall of the political system in Stouffville.

At least the money raised by it could pay for the irresponsible decisions and subsequent corrections required to fix the mistakes made by our present council. I hope the public remembers who they will vote for at the next election.

Certainly not those who voted for the South Park complex.

MARK DEWAR
STOUFFVILLE

Jobs should be open to all

I am concerned that Government of Ontario jobs are unfairly reserved in favour of those who are already public servants.

Many of the jobs advertised in the government's own Job Mart newspaper are listed as restricted. That means no person other than a government employee can apply. The government belongs to all the people, and as taxpayers, we are entitled to apply for the jobs.

CHANDRA SEKHAR
MARKHAM

Return stolen rollerblades

I am 12 years old. On May 1, I was playing on the tennis courts with my friends at the Stouffville rec complex.

I left my black Bauer rollerblades which have a silver buckle and silver lettering, outside the tennis courts in a burgundy and black back pack. When I went to get them, they were gone. I worked hard for the money to buy them by cutting lawns last summer. This year I am working for a new bike, and by the looks of it I may be working for new blades too. If anyone found my pack or has seen my blades I would like to have them back. I am offering a reward of \$35. Call me at 640-5409, or leave them anonymously at St. Mark School or the fire hall.

A 12 YEAR OLD
STOUFFVILLE



Debora Kelly

Child abuse law is a needed first step

The Tories saw a most unusual occurrence last week as one of their bills sped through the legislature with the unanimous support of the Liberals and NDP.

Bill 6 makes it easier for children's aid societies to take action at the first signs of abuse or neglect.

The changes update the 10-year-old Child and Family Services Act, shifting the focus from keeping families together at all costs to protecting the child.

Social Services Minister Janet Ecker lauds the law for creating "stronger tools to enable front-line workers, professionals and the courts to do their jobs more effectively."

Can we breathe a sigh of relief now? Like many reforms enacted by the Tories, it is welcome and needed, but without other measures — including a significant increase in funding — a troubling situation remains.

York Region's CAS has been struggling unsuccessfully for years to cope with the growth in our communities, so much so that the ministry stepped in to ensure the most pressing problem — a backlog of weeks, if not months — was addressed.

Despite additional funds, a litany of problems remain, although the CAS claims cases are investigated within the 21-day limit.

Just as Bill 6 received final reading, a coroner's inquest was examining the death of seven-month-old Zachary Morrison Rogers, who was strangled in the safety straps of his car seat in a home daycare in East Gwillimbury two years ago.

It was revealed three months before the baby died, the CAS had received a complaint the daycare may not be up to standard and that the home was an unstable environment.

Yet the CAS didn't investigate until one month after Zachary died.

While Zachary's family is now suing the CAS for \$16 million, the CAS' lawyer says nothing could have prevented "that tragic death."

It's easy to understand that Zachary's mother, Laura Morrison, isn't buying it — no mother would take her child to a daycare under investigation by the CAS. If only she had known.

As this case highlights, simply pushing amendments through the provincial legislature — the Tories refused to hold public hearings on the bill — won't guarantee an end to tragedies such as the one which took the life of Zachary Morrison Rogers.

The job is far from finished.

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