

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Let's celebrate Canada Day in style

Most of us are enjoying a holiday today — a chance to sleep in, catch up on the yard work, play with the kids, maybe take in a community barbecue or fireworks display.

But for the average Canadian, Canada Day is a pretty low-key celebration — especially compared to the orgy of high-volume patriotic hoopla that emanates from south of the border three days later.

It's not that we don't love our country every bit as much as our American neighbours.

Ask most Canadians and they'll tell you about the beauty of our land and their pride in the accomplishments of the many great Canadians.

And they will mention the many great symbols of Canada: the beaver, the Last Spike, the Bluenose, the Columbia Icefields, the Parliament buildings, the CN Tower — the list goes on.

They'll talk about the quality of life we enjoy here — the booming economy, a health-care system that is open to all — a lifestyle that is the envy of many nations.

But it's more than those material things that makes Canada great. We enjoy rights and freedoms and a day-to-day sense of peace that many in this world can only dream about.

Sure, we complain and we bicker, but deep down we know that, in many other places, complaining and bickering could get us killed.

So we appreciate what we have, it's just that flag waving isn't usually our style.

It seems the only time we stand up and make a lot of noise about our nation is when it's threatened.

After a narrow victory for national unity, Prime Minister Jean Chretien encouraged Canadians to get to know their country better and promised initiatives to help us.

Maybe on just this one day of the year, we should throw off our Canadian reserve a little bit, wave a flag and sing *O Canada* (really loud, not just that mumbly lip-moving thing you do at the hockey game).

Then, tomorrow, when the party is over, go back to your polite, reserved Canadian ways. But, in that quiet manner, commit yourself to preserving our Canadian way of life.

Participate in our democratic process — and that doesn't just mean voting, it means educating yourself about the issues, speaking your mind, letting politicians know where you stand and keeping them accountable.

Get involved in your community and support charities that look after your neighbours when they need help.

Teach your children about this country, its history, its traditions and the many different cultures that make it special.

And reach out to new Canadians and help them integrate smoothly into our society.

Buy Canadian whenever possible and support our artists and creative people, too.

Whenever and however you can, make your contribution to Canada — and not just in the form of income tax.

Yes, it seems hokey and silly and obvious.

But we should never forget that Canada works because of us. If Canadians forget our history and struggles, stop caring about one another, become violent and fractious and unco-operative, this great nation would fall apart overnight.

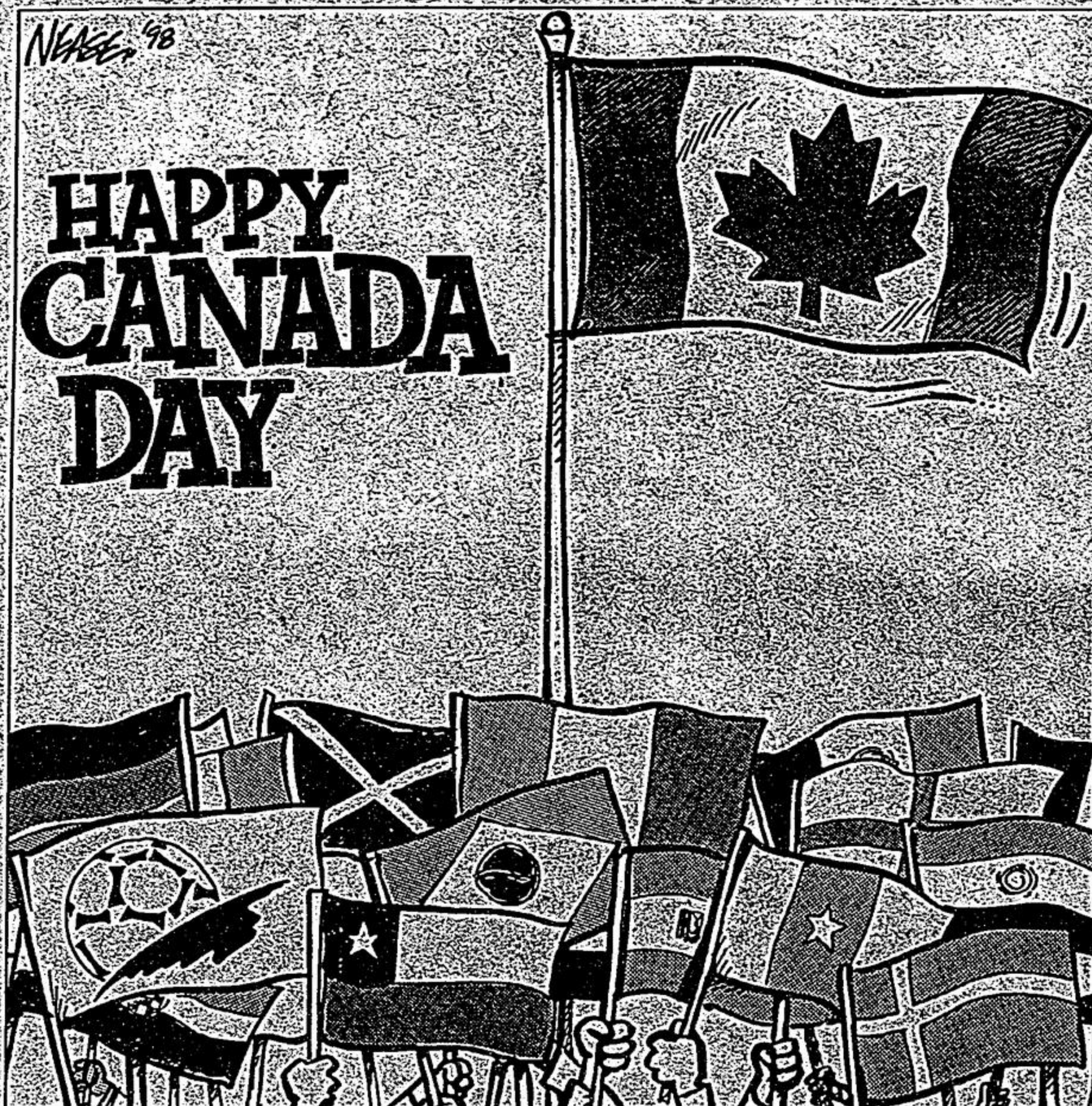
This country has weathered many challenges over the past 132 years and it will, no doubt, face many more in the next millennium.

Every day that we make this gigantic experiment work is worth celebrating.

Today, let's do it in style.

OPINION

THE BEST OF NEASE



Doug Devine

Decline in minor hockey makes pro woes trivial

At the risk of sounding very un-Canadian on Canada Day, I can't think of a single reason why Canada's NHL hockey teams should be getting any tax breaks from local, provincial or federal governments.

I can, however, think of many reasons why all three levels of government should be scrambling to subsidize minor hockey organizations across the country.

In the Twilight Zone of Canadian politics, our so-called leaders are lining up to subsidize the millionaires running and playing the game professionally but are doing almost nothing to improve the access, cost and quality of minor hockey.

Canada's six NHL teams began this charade by whining over their combined losses of \$170 million between 1996 and 1998.

True to their Canadian roots, the owners insist the only solution to their money woes is to have the government bail them out through annual tax subsidies totalling about \$60 million.

The sorry state of professional hockey north of the border is entirely our fault, and if something isn't done soon, the millionaire owners will simply pack up and leave for more lucrative markets in the United States.

And then we'll be sorry, won't we? But wait.

If we're going to throw \$60 million a year into subsidizing our national pastime, shouldn't it go to the level of hockey that needs it most? If so, is there anyone outside of politics and the NHL that thinks the most deserving level is at the top?

Between the desperate shortage of ice time, the outrageously high cost of registration and our increasingly warm winters, the declining state of minor hockey in this country makes the professional woes seem trivial by comparison.

There was much hand-wringing last Saturday when only nine of the first-round selections in the annual NHL entry draft were Canadians; only one of whom came from southern Ontario — long considered the world's mecca of hockey talent and player development.

But not only was the draft a chilling reminder of our disappearing dominance of the hockey world, it also made it clear that those of us who love the sport have far more to worry about than losing a few Canadian NHL teams.

Reversing that trend is a much more worthy objective for our politicians, especially those who seem so intent on throwing away tax dollars.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Council should listen to residents not CAO

If you should see Mayor Wayne Emmerson or members of council around town, please ask them the following questions:

- Why is the proposed library/pool complex being built in a field called South Park, destroying our current park?
- Why are we wasting money (tax dollars) to the tune of \$200,000 to \$300,000 for roads and parking when this money could be used to build a first-class library and pool if the library remained on Main Street and the pool was located at the recreation complex?
- Why has the library been downsized, and will not meet the needs of the residents now or in the future?
- Why build the proposed library/pool complex in an isolated location when it does not benefit residents? Instead, it carries no savings, just additional costs.
- Why do councillors think the proposed library/pool complex is their project? It belongs to the residents.
- Why do we need a CAO (Merlin Dewing) at a \$102,000-a-year salary plus expenses and benefits and time off?

Dewing is only responsible for 54 employees and an operating budget of \$15 million and he is the highest-paid CAO in York Region for a municipality of comparable size.

These are only a few questions to ask this council. I am sure residents have many more.

Emmerson and council just don't get it.

Give your heads a shake and listen to the residents for a change not your CAO — our \$102,000-a-year man.

BRYAN MILLSIP
STOUFFVILLE

Owners of 407 praised for opening Hwy. 48 exit

Congratulations to the new owners of Hwy. 407 for taking the initiative to open the two-kilometre stretch between McCowan Road and Hwy. 48.

Despite the whining of some local politicians, the new exit hasn't caused major traffic problems.

From what I've seen during my trips on the highway, there haven't been any problems.

MURRAY YACK

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Letters should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and a daytime telephone number so authorship can be confirmed.

Anonymous letters will not be published.

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