

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Amalgamation near, time to talk is now

Five years. That's the outside limit Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Gilchrist will give York Region municipalities to whip themselves into some sort of amalgamated state, streamlined, cost-reduced, efficient.

Five years. That time frame shouldn't be a problem, since senior politicians and bureaucrats have been discussing governance and amalgamation for the past three years.

After all, Gilchrist has only given Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury a 90-day deadline to come up with a local restructuring plan or face provincial intervention.

All these regions have been discussing the possibilities of mergers and although, in some cases, there is dissension about direction, the perception is there will be successful resolutions to the conflicts, and the outcomes will be positive ones.

In York Region, mayors who even want to talk about amalgamation face negative reactions from their colleagues, many of whom just want to walk away from the challenge of creating a new York Region or effectively explaining to the province why the old York Region is working just fine.

Newmarket's Tom Taylor has formulated a working option for other mayors to consider.

Good for him. Get some options on the table and at least launch discussions. That's the type of leadership we'd like to see from all the mayors.

Many have stated they're willing to talk about it — Aurora's Tim Jones, Markham's Don Cousens, Richmond Hill's Bill Bell, Georgina's Rob Grossi, Vaughans Lorna Jackson, and East Gwillimbury's Jim Mortson.

King Township's Mayor Margaret Black has been adamant in her opposition. And Whitchurch-Stouffville's Wayne Emmerson has said he can't see any benefit for his community to amalgamate.

On behalf of the residents of King and Whitchurch-Stouffville, we can only hope these two mayors will change their shortsighted, parochial views now that Gilchrist has made it clear restructuring will occur, if not today, then within five years.

But it's not just the mayors who have to demonstrate leadership on the issue.

Regional Chairperson Bill Fisch must now jump into the amalgamation pool with both feet.

As the political leader of the region, he must be prepared to float a few suggestions and use his position of authority to help shape the region's future.

Residents be able to voice their opinions about amalgamation, as well.

Perhaps *The Economist & Sun/Stouffville Tribunes* Millennium Survey on amalgamation will give our politicians a starting point for discussions. Responses are pouring in and, contrary to the views of many local politicians, most residents seem to favour some form of amalgamation.

Local politicians have to figure out their options for best success and float some trial balloons with their residents.

Local councils should be drawing maps. They should be talking to their neighbouring councils to see if there are benefits in planning and development, finances or even social services if they join forces.

No one said it's going to be an easy task — juggling public wishes, political sensitivities, financial constraints and planning and development realities isn't going to make amalgamation a piece of cake.

But it's better for us to make the plans for ourselves, instead of having Queen's Park redraw our map. And now, more than ever, it should be clear to everyone that the province will do just that.

OPINION



Doug Devine

Wamback site has backing of 4,000 Canadians

It's unscientific, it's premature, and it's based on incomplete information.

But that doesn't make it any less compelling that the 4,000 people who have visited the Jonathan Wamback website over the past four days are all but unanimous in their condemnation of Canada's Young Offenders Act.

Jonathan was, by all accounts, a well-adjusted, well-behaved, well-liked and talented 15-year-old — the kind of kid every parent dreams of raising.

Then, in the space of a few minutes, Jonathan's near-perfect life was destroyed.

He was viciously beaten and kicked in the head by a gang of thugs in a quiet Newmarket park in broad daylight on June 29 — possibly in a premeditated retaliation for helping police arrest a vandal.

Two months later, doctors are still unsure when, or if, he will recover.

His devastated parents have channelled some of their emotions into correcting the grave injustice our society has dealt their family.

While their only child lies comatose in a hospital room, the three teenagers (ages 16 and 17) accused of trying to kill their son are free on bail. This glaring inequity is clearly outrageous.

But the much greater injustice the Wambacks and their 4,000 supporters fear is what happens if they are convicted.

Unless the Crown can convince a judge to move the case to adult court, the most these three will face is three years in jail — which could be served in a youth detention centre, a halfway house or even open custody.

If the case is moved to adult court, they will face a maximum of life in prison, with no chance of parole for at least four years.

If that's how this case plays out, then the Young Offenders Act will have done its job — which is to give teenage criminals a chance to straighten their lives out, while still protecting society from violent thugs.

But, as 4,000 Canadians have stated emphatically, it's the if that is no longer acceptable. Violent criminals must be treated as violent criminals, no matter what their age, and no judge should have the right to let them walk away with a slap on the wrist.

If our federal politicians are paying attention to public sentiment and remove that if, then we'll all be a little bit safer from violent crime — and we can thank Jonathan Wamback and his parents.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hiring on gender creates class of losers and winners

Re: *Change needed to level gender imbalance*, column, Aug. 10.

Certainly it is easy to criticize Wilfred Laurier University and the Ontario Human Rights Commission for a discriminatory job posting. It is easy because the problem this posting tries to solve is incorrectly analyzed and because the proposed solution is morally repugnant, ineffective and reflects a consistent bias on the part of the Human Rights Commission.

Actions like this are how the Human Rights Commission has squandered its moral authority and become a laughing-stock.

The principle everyone endorses is equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. It is not necessarily evidence of discrimination if there are more men than women on a particular university faculty, any more than the fact that women generally outlive men is evidence that men are discriminated against by the health care system.

And if there was previous discrimination against women in hiring or promotion, we don't require those who benefited to drop several grades and work their way back up, nor do we help those who lost out.

Instead, we create a whole new class of winners and losers out of the current crop of job applicants based on gender.

If you think this is an acceptable solution, apply your principles consistently and send flamethrowers instead of

peace keepers to Kosovar's ethnic Albanians.

And what about the value of diversity? Do new ideas and fresh approaches have anything to do with gender? What an offensive idea. Or do original ideas and whole areas of research get lost in a stultifying atmosphere of political correctness, which can only be reinforced by the university administration taking this type of action?

If anyone sincerely thought this type of job posting was a good idea, wouldn't they have to advocate men-only postings for the school of nursing?

STU GAIRNS

Stouffville teens helped world's needy children

As president of World Vision Canada, I would like to thank the many committed students and organizers in the Stouffville area who helped make the 30 Hour Famine a success in 1999. To date, the event has raised a record \$3.1 million for needy children around the world.

Students in the community raised \$5,608. This money will be used to help Kosovar refugees, orphans in Rwanda, street kids in Cambodia and Romania, children of war in Uganda and needy children here in Canada.

Next year's 30 Hour Famine will be April 7 and 8. I hope Stouffville students will join the fight against hunger again by calling 1-888-8-FAMINE!

DAVE TOYGEN

PRESIDENT, WORLD VISION CANADA

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