

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Just what was the York Region public school board thinking when it kicked acclaimed East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville Trustee Bob Burrows off the board?

With little ceremony, the board pulled the seat out from under the former teacher, announcing it had somehow determined he is not a resident of York Region.

Burrows insists while he rents a farm in Durham Region, he lives with his parents in Jackson's Point. Yet the board did the dirty deed without informing Burrows — and his constituents — or allowing him to be present to respond to its concern.

The board is pointing to the Education Act, which deals with the requirements for becoming a trustee, while Burrows says the clerk's office in Whitchurch-Stouffville approved his candidacy despite protests from board chairperson Bill Crothers.

The debate becomes immaterial in light of the board's high-handed move to dump him. That was an inexcusable action — no matter who is right. And taxpayers could now be picking up the tab for a legal battle as the ousted trustee vows to drag the board into court to answer for its undemocratic action.

At least one member of the board, newly elected Trustee Alan Shefman, has the sense to question the method to the board's madness.

He wants to know why Burrows was excluded from the process and if taxpayers paid for the board's investigation of the matter. Burrows claims a private investigator was hired to track him.

Citing the potential for litigation, Crothers is refusing to comment, saying the pertinent information will come out "at an appropriate time" following any court proceedings.

Could it be that some members of the board simply don't want anybody stirring the pot, instead of docilely following the lead of the educators?

Burrows was, after all, suspended from Holland Landing Public School in 1996.

He made headlines in local papers over his stance on teachers' union issues and tangled with the board over mouldy portables at his school.

He is an outspoken individual whose in-your-face demeanour has obviously won him few friends at the board.

Rather than continue to put itself in a position to have its motives questioned, the board must come clean on its decision and allow Burrows to have his say — before a costly court battle is launched.

OPINION

TELEPHONE

(905) 294-2200 / (416) 798-7624

FAX: (905) 294-1538

EMAIL: newsroom@econsun.com



Dave Teetzel

Mr. Oak Ridges Moraine can be an ornery fellow

Without question, the big newsmaker of the year was the Oak Ridges Moraine.

From the controversy over development plans that began with emotional public meetings in Richmond Hill to an intense environmentally driven municipal election in King Township, to a flurry of private members bills at Queen's Park, the moraine was at the centre of York Region's news.

I caught up with the moraine recently for an in-depth interview.

DT: So, Mr. Moraine, how does it feel to be the newsmaker of the year?

ORM: Ach, why would I make the news? I haven't done anything this year. I haven't been doing since the last ice age — just sitting around, forming rivers, filtering the drinking water for every living organism on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Nothing special.

DT: But it has been a very trying year for you.

ORM: Tell me about it. I don't think I've ever felt so old. You know, I'm getting a big bald spot right down the middle.

DT: Yes, it's the Bayview extension.

ORM: Oy, more cars. Yes, by all means, drive all over me. Oh no, the moraine won't mind. With the pavement and the road salt and the leaky oil pans.

DT: Most of the controversy this year centred on residential development. Are you concerned about experiencing more construction in the coming years?

ORM: Well, that's the way it goes. First, you get a little bald patch, then the houses start popping up and before you know it, you're breaking out in subdivisions and there's nothing that'll clear it up.

DT: As you know, all the development proposals have been before the Ontario Municipal Board since May and there are many people on your side.

ORM: Feh! They hold hearings, they don't ask me what I want. Beside, who do I have on my side, some guy who runs around in a chipmunk suit?

DT: Well, there's Mike Colle, Dalton McGuinty, Steve Gilchrist. In fact, Queen's Park is on your side.

ORM: Feh! With friends like this, who needs enemies? These people come to visit me once, then they leave me sitting here like I'm a big pile of dirt.

DT: Do you have anything to say to your many supporters who participated in the Save Don't Pave campaign?

ORM: What is that like acupuncture, with the sticking little signs all down my spine?

I don't need little signs, I just need all you people to go away and leave an old landform in peace.

DT: Well, Mr. Moraine, it's been a blast and I can see why you're universally loved in the Greater Toronto Area, but I really have to be going.

ORM: Oh, sure, leave. I'll just be sitting here alone, filtering all your water.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IODE working to help gas-sniffing Inuit children in Labrador

We have all been concerned about the Inuit children we have read about and seen on television who have been sniffing gas in Sheshatshiu, Labrador.

Their lives are truly in crisis. What can you do to help?

The IODE, a national Canadian women's charitable organization has been working to assist these children in Labrador since 1977.

Not only have educational materials and toys been shipped there annually, but the Snack Pack program has also been in place since that year.

Children are provided with a nutritious mid-morning snack, including milk, at schools in Sheshatshiu, Davis Inlet and Northwest River.

In Markham, our IODE chapter, named after Dr. Innis Mary MacDonald (1902-1983), has been active for the past five years.

We have "adopted" a senior class in Peenamin MacKenzie Public School, in Sheshatshiu, Labrador.

Through our fundraising efforts, we have been sending items to this class — including computers, skis, hockey equipment, games, school and art supplies.

Our Christmas packages also include knitted hats and mittens, along with personal items for each child.

We have received letters and pictures from the children and their teacher describing

their school activities and lives.

Many of those children we have seen on television have close relatives in our class, so their stories have become personal.

Other classes within the schools in Labrador are also "adopted" by other IODE Chapters throughout Canada.

Celebrating over 100 years of service, the IODE has striven to improve the quality of life for children, youth and those in need.

It is a Canadian registered charitable organization.

If anyone wishes to make donations to the Snack Pack program, or for the crisis relief fund for the children of Sheshatshiu, through the IODE, please contact me at (905) 294-6219.

For more information on the IODE, please refer to the National Website: www.iodecanda.ca. New members are welcome.

LINDA DENNIS

Regent

Dr. Innis MacDonald Chapter, IODE

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Your opinion is important to us, for our letters to the editor pages and on our Web site.

We invite you to join the ongoing discussions at yrng.com and you're welcome to launch your own discussion there, too.

The site serves York Region Newspaper Group readers.

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9 Heritage Rd.,

Markham, Ont., L3P 1M3

Email: letters@econsun.com

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Phone: (905) 294-2200

Fax: (905) 294-1538

Classified:

1-800-743-3353

Distribution

(905) 294-8244

distribution@econsun.com