

Ernie will win and Jean will retire; take my word for it

I have to wonder if Tennessee Ernie Ford was looking at the first few years of a new century when he sang, "I'm another day older and deeper in debt. Oh, Lordie, don't you call me 'cause I can't go. I owe my soul to the company store."

As I welcome 2002, I wonder what the next few years will bring for my Canada, my Ontario, my York Region, my Whitchurch-Stouffville and my family. Are we up for it? Will we outlive our money, our will or our welcome?

On a national scale, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that:

- Canadian soldiers not enter into combat anywhere in the world, but that they continue to do what they do best: maintain peace on earth.

- Prime Minister Jean Chretien retires this year and passes the reins of power to either Newfoundland's Brian Tobin or Ontario's Alan Rock. Paul Martin hangs out with too much money to be able to bring balance to the PM's job.

- Progressive Conservative Leader Joe Clark recognizes that he, too, has gone beyond the call of duty and it's time to be gentle to himself. This very distinguished Canadian should pass on the Tory baton. As for the Canadian Alliance Party and Stockwell Day, who needs either? This country's too precious to risk on a political agenda authored by the mean-spirited or led by an incompetent opportunist. Day is a rolling stone. He should keep on rolling.

- The New Democratic Party receives a blood transfusion. Since the New Democrats were led in the past by brilliance and tenacity in the likes of Tommy Douglas, David Lewis and Ed Broadbent, they deserve to be salvaged.

Anyone with left leanings should quit sulking and help the NDP rebuild.

On the provincial level, Ontario could use some tender loving care.

I don't know about you, but I feel a little bruised by Mike Harris and his not-so-merry-men. A lullaby followed by an afternoon nap is in order.

Let's look at the options now that Harris is leaving Queen's Park.

Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty is past 40, but he looks like a little boy playing school. I know, I know; it's not his fault he has those boyish looks. Dalton's as smart as a



Joan Ransberry

whip. Works hard and he's a scrapper.

But can the party sell him as a leader? I have my doubts.

Ontario's had a falling out with the NDP and can't remember why. Howard Hampton's just not anybody's favourite son.

Then there's Ernie Eves. Old Ernie. He's just such a Tory. Ernie looks like a Tory. Talks like a Tory. Thinks like a Tory and smells like a Tory. He's full of no surprises.

I predict he wins the leadership and we'll have an Ernie-led minority government next time out. Ernie will run the government better than it's been run in 30 years.

But, it will be dull, dull, dull. As for me, I'll do what I did in the last century: vote Liberal.

Now for something completely regional: I predict York

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Region will be the same York Region it's been for the last decade: The mayor in each town will tell every other town it's the best in York Region. Nobody will dispute the claim.

Most mayors in the region will seek and win re-election in 2003. Each will likely deserve to be re-elected, none more so than King Township's Margaret Black. She's my choice as the region's best mayor.

Councils will be smaller and accomplish more after 2003.

Don't overlook or underestimate Whitchurch-Stouffville. It's a strong little town and I expect it could weather many a storm.

Whitchurch-Stouffville was built on a pay-as-you-go system. It worked. I doubt it will waver much from this approach.

However, Stouffville's downtown core will continue to be a challenge. Empty stores eventually become eyesores.

I predict my birthplace will take on even more meaning in the not-so-distant future.

It doesn't matter where I live; my heart is spread over a 250-acre family farm. The truth is: just now, the farm needs me and I need it. We're buddies.

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