

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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COLUMN

Call out superficial remarks about women

Until Markham phenomenon Andre De Grasse ran into our TV screens and onto the Olympic podium alongside the world's fastest man, Usain Bolt, all the medals won by Canadians were earned by women.

Over and over again, sportscasters — usually male — referred with admiration, but some amazement, to the fact that all the medal winners until Sunday night's marquee 100-meter event were female.

It made me think of a media campaign, which started in Toronto, New York City and Los Angeles just before the Olympic Games began, to "call out" or shine an unfavourable spotlight on media commentary that judges female athletes on their appearance, rather than on their skills.

A Dove #MyBeautyMySay campaign holds the premise that all too often, female athletes are featured in sports magazines and news stories in passive poses, glamourized and sexualized, while male athletes are portrayed in action-oriented ways emphasizing their skills. It further hypothesizes that too often media commentators focus on the looks of female athletes and on appearance rather than achievements.

An interactive billboard campaign launched July 26 at Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto, along with other key American cities, asking people to "call out" or aim negative Tweets at media outlets or commentators which belittle women athletes.

Campaign organizers do credit Canadian media with being far more positive in their views and commentary on women athletes, but said such is not always the case with other media globally.

As part of their rationale for the campaign, Dove and Unilever pointed out that eight in 10 (81 per cent) of Canadian women wish the media did a better job of portraying women with diverse physical appearance, and of varying ages, races, shapes and sizes.

But then came the Olympic Games in Rio. And onto the world stage burst a group of talented, courageous and skilled athletes — swim-



Marney Beck

mers, such as triple-threat Penny Oleksiak and synchro duo Meaghan Benfeito and Roseline Filion, rowers Lindsay Jennerich and Patricia Obee, our bronze team of women pursuit cyclists, the entire women's rugby team and — of course — our own golden trampolinist Rosie MacLennan.

Who would dare write, or Tweet or Facebook about these medal-winning athletes by focusing only on their appearance, their makeup, or their clothing?

Sadly, sometimes media representatives in their articles and more often their readers in social media posts do consider appearance or clothing or other superficial factors. We all know that online commentators, especially, can be cruel and cutting — even vicious.

Tessa Virtue, Canadian ice dancing champion, is part of the #MyBeautyMySay campaign. She admits that she's been the target of mean-spirited comments calling out for her to "be thinner" or "don't eat" to be the best she can be in a sport that combines artistry with athletic skills.

"Let's face it, all women are judged too often on their looks instead of their accomplishments," states Virtue.

So while it's hard to imagine that any online discussion about our medal-winning athletes would focus on their physical attributes, their swimsuits, hair or overall looks, if you see any derogatory comments aimed at our women Olympians, you're invited to call them out at #MyBeautyMySay.

— Marney Beck is the managing editor of the Richmond Hill Liberal and the Thornhill Liberal.

Best, worst from power outage

Where were you Saturday morning when the lights went out in much of the Stouffville area? I was at Tim Hortons. Where were you when the lights came on? I was still at Tims on Main Street along with a lineup of other coffee-cravers. Strange isn't it how the loss of hydro can bring out the best and worst in people.

At the intersection of Stouffville's Winona Drive and Main Street, an impatient motorist menacingly gave another driver the finger as the latter politely granted the right-of-way to a mother pushing a baby carriage. At the corner of Ninth Line and Main, a woman vacated her car to assist a senior using a walker. It takes all kinds.

Bears invade

The Schell family cottage on Hawk Lake near Minden is, like their family business on Edward Street, is open to everyone. However, a trek from the mainland, whether by boat or by snowmobile to this island paradise now has its limitations after two surprising experiences.

Recently, when a family member visited the site, she discovered devastation inside. She concluded a black bear cub had gained entry through a small window.

"Everything was taken from the fridge," her mother, Barb Schell explained. "There was maple syrup all over the rug." Husband Harry said the intruder had even sampled the contents of a plastic liquor container.

"He could have been in there two or three days," Harry said. He believes the cub left by the same way he entered.

No sooner had the mess been cleaned up than a second bear arrived, thought to be a full-grown adult. He



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

broke down the front door and again ravaged the cottage interior. What food remained from the first entry was eaten, said Harry.

In the 35 years they've owned the island cottage, neither Harry nor Barbara has ever seen a bear. Neither have their neighbours. They presume the animals must have swum across. "Bears are good swimmers," says Harry.

The two hold no grudges and have no desire to see their unwelcomed visitors killed. "I like bears," says Barbara.

Trendy Wendy's

Construction's well underway at Stouffville's new Wendy's in the Giant Tiger Plaza. The target date for opening is Sept. 6 or 8 according to site superintendent Rod Young. Wendy's will replace the former Country Style Donut business that closed several months ago.

The Main drag

Work is underway on major reconstruction of Stouffville's Main Street, that, when completed will cost an estimated \$14 million. The project will be divided into four phases with the first section extending from the 10th Line to Stouffer Street. Soil testing as required by the provincial Ministry of

the Environment and Climate Change will be done as each section of pavement is removed according to communications specialist Glenn Jackson. Reconstruction is expected to take four years.

Fire trucks then, now

The old will eventually be new again. Stouffville's 1946 Fargo pumper truck, now officially owned by the town, will be refurbished as planned, Chief Rob McKenzie confirmed this week. Additional funds are still required plus a firm to do the job, he said. Also, two new units, including a ladder truck, will soon replace two older vehicles, he said.

Guest preachers

We're not sheep-stealers. By this we mean wife Jean and I don't believe in coaxing regular church-attenders away from their denominations.

However, if you're seeking a sanctuary this Sunday, we're in charge of the service at Stouffville's St. James Presbyterian, 6432 Main St. and the welcome mat's out. Worship time is 10 a.m.

Better late than never

Saturday's two-inch rainfall came late for some crops says Gormley farmer John Doner "but better late than never".

Due to the drought, much of the corn acreage has suffered badly, says Doner, but soybeans should recover. "It's sporadic," he states, "some corn crops are doing well while other pockets are dead."

He predicts that, province-wide, corn yield could be reduced by as much as 75 per cent.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.

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