

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

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comment

Educational access in the city centre a great idea

As small cities all across the country have seen continued decline from the downtown to outlying edges, the city centre of Barrie has suffered as well with the loss of retail and other business activities to shopping centres and large discount stores.

To be able to avoid the certain death of their downtowns, municipal leaders all across the country are struggling to find solutions.

Peter Silveira
WARD 5

In Barrie, your municipal leaders have invested heavily to make certain our city centre continues to thrive and be vibrant. But we have to understand that to be able to be successful, there are many pieces to put together.

Today I will focus in on just one of these pieces, education.

The reality is, education is good for you. Whether you are a student wanting to attain that first entry-level position to launch your professional career, an employer looking for a graduate who can hit the ground running, or a store owner, in the end, education is good for the community.

Barrie is slowly transforming into a city of the future by investing in education.

Barrie is the birthplace of Georgian College, which is well-known for attracting students not only from Canada, but also as far away as Brazil and China. Georgian has invested \$62 million in adding its Health and Wellness Centre.

The new centre is creating 400 new full- and part-time jobs, bringing the payroll to nearly \$16 million. Now, another outstanding educational institution has its eyes on Barrie. Laurentian University is planning a campus for 3,000 students which will be located in the city centre.

A university located in our downtown will provide many benefits. Not only will it serve as a knowledge centre and incubator of innovations, but it will also provide thousands of dollars in property taxes.

With a direct economic impact on the municipality through employment and expenditures, this will generate many jobs and activities not only in the city centre but also in other industries throughout Barrie as well.

By diversifying and expanding the local economic base, Laurentian will provide a critical balance in the local economy and most importantly will stimulate residential growth and leisure activities in the city's core.

The question we have to ask is how will 3,000 students impact the city centre? How will these students cope with the existing dilemmas? It is important to clearly articulate the relationship between crime prevention and comprehensive initiatives and capacity building in communities.

I believe the community has a big part to play in this process. We need to assess the contribution of residents living in this inner city neighbourhood, by providing a forum for community representatives to voice their opinions and concerns.

I am a big supporter of making our city centre a better place to live, work and play. Our city centre is a prime location for many businesses, such as government administration, financial institutions, speciality retailers and entertainment, as well as many others.

Cleaning up the city centre and adding the Laurentian University campus will make Barrie an even better place for everyone.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project or any other, please don't hesitate in contacting me at 705-739-4275, or psilveira@barrie.ca.

Peter Silveira is Barrie's Ward 5 councillor.



Kant's Categorical Imperative holds that we all experience an innate moral duty... the right motive to do the right thing...to do one's duty...



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■ our opinion

MacNeil should have resigned back in 2009

Don MacNeil should resign from Barrie's police board and return all the money he's been paid to sit there.

In fact, he should have quit more than two years ago and stopped taking his salary.

That he hasn't done this isn't all his fault, but mostly it is.

This board oversees the administration of policing in Barrie, setting the annual budget, hiring new officers and dealing with other police matters, such as new security cameras. The chief is responsible for actually policing Barrie, how the department's resources are used, its priorities, etc.

The Ontario government appoints two people to the five-person board for three-year terms. The city appoints one and two are councillors, one usually the mayor.

MacNeil was a provincial appointee to the police board in December of 2008.

But in June of 2009, he was arrested for assault with a weapon (a TV remote control).

MacNeil says he offered to take an unpaid leave of absence from the board shortly afterwards, but the offer was rejected.

Police board chairman Doug Jure says minutes from the June 16, 2009 meeting show MacNeil offered to take a

temporary leave of absence — but not an unpaid one.

The board didn't accept MacNeil's offer because it was serious enough that it should instead be handled by the Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCP). It's an independent oversight agency to ensure adequate and effective policing under the Ontario Police Services Act.

Only that commission can suspend or remove a police board member, and it suspended MacNeil in 2009.

He was found guilty of assault with a weapon in October of 2010, and given a conditional discharge — following 12 months of probation, meaning he would have no criminal record.

MacNeil remains suspended, pending an OCP hearing Nov. 21-22. But he's still being paid for his police board duties, \$4,275 a year. That's \$12,825 for his three-year term, money paid by Barrie taxpayers. He's only attended seven police board meetings, because of his suspension.

It can be argued the OCP has taken far too long to deal with MacNeil's hearing, that it should have resolved this matter long ago. But the commission does have other police matters to hear and decide.

It wouldn't have come to this, however, if MacNeil had just

done the right thing.

He should have resigned from the police board as soon as he was charged in June of 2009. No matter what he thought of the merits of the charge, it was a criminal charge.

No member of a police board should sit, even suspended, while facing a criminal charge. It undermines the board's credibility.

Since only the OCP could actually remove MacNeil, he should have done the right thing and removed himself.

And he should have never accepted another police board paycheck. It's not the money itself — although the city could find a good place to spend \$12,825 — it's the principle. A salary, especially when it's public money, should be earned.

MacNeil has not earned this money. He should even return what he was paid before being charged, because of the scandal he caused the city, and the province, which appointed him.

His police board term finishes this Dec. 19, and by then the OCP hearing should be finished and a decision on MacNeil made.

The province can then call and ask MacNeil if he wants to be re-appointed, or appoint someone else.

Don MacNeil should not receive a call.

Aiming to strengthen cancer care in Canada

This is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and on Oct. 6, I had the honour of introducing my own Private Member's Bill (C-314) to the House of Commons.

Patrick Brown
PARLIAMENT HILL

A private member's bill is chosen by lottery and 30 lucky MPs are selected to put forward their own legislation at the beginning of a new session of Parliament.

In my first six years of Parliament, I had not been one of the selections, but this year my fortunes changed and I drew the third slot.

Cancer care has been a critical issue and I knew instantly that I wanted to do something that could strengthen cancer care in Canada. Every year, thousands of Barrie residents participate in the CIBC Run for the Cure and I know they are not alone in their passion for fighting this insidious disease.

Breast cancer is more easily treated (and often curable) when found early. In general, women 20 to 39 years old should have a clinical breast exam (CBE) every three years, and those 40 years and older should have a CBE and mammogram every year.

Dense breast tissue is one of the top risk factors for breast cancer. It is critical for all women to be informed if they have dense breast tissue when having a mammogram.

However, women are rarely informed they have dense breast tissue — making them at a higher risk as a result and that mammography may fail them. It is more challenging to detect breast cancer in women who have heterogeneous or dense breast tissue because both the cancer and dense breast tissue appear white on mammograms.

Obviously this makes detection more difficult and my private member's bill will target screening towards this challenging area.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, in 2011 it is expected that over 25,000 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, of which, regrettably, over 5,000 will pass away.

About 40% of females have dense breast tissue, which makes early detection of breast cancer very difficult under existing screening protocols.

It is my hope that this bill, over time, will help save lives by ensuring early detection. Health sectors in other areas of the world are beginning to more aggressively target dense tissue to enable early detection. It is time for Canada to do the same.

I want to thank Dr. Rob Ballagh, of Barrie, and Andrea Paine, from Health Canada, for their counsel on this bill.

In a majority government, private member's bills which have prime ministerial support have a strong chance of becoming law.

I met with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq on this important proposition and they indicated they were very much in favour. I believe there is a very strong chance of this bill passing through the House of Commons and Senate in this parliamentary session. It is currently scheduled for its first hour of debate this Monday, Oct. 24.

The government of Canada can certainly play an effective role in the adoption of effective early detection screening practices. Targeting dense tissue is one of the means by which we can make a tangible difference in the fight against breast cancer.

Too many families have been touched by this form of cancer and I am hopeful this legislation will save lives.

Patrick Brown is Barrie's Member of Parliament.

quote
of the day

Let's set an example and be proactive. I don't want my little girl exposed to it (cigarette smoke)."

Mark Saunders, concerned that his newborn daughter's first breath of air outside Royal Victoria Hospital would be from a cloud of smoke.

Reduce your use and get paid in the process

The Ontario election is over, and neither of the parties promising a lower electricity price won.

Now the news reports rates will increase a little on Nov. 1, and a lot over the next 20 years. But you can still lower your own electricity costs right now.

Back in the spring, I told you about Lowfoot.com, a company that pays you to save electricity. Since then, it has grown by leaps and bounds, and moved on to its second phase of operations — selling 'negawatts.'

You have probably heard of megawatts, a unit of energy. 'Negawatts' are a unit of energy saved — a negative watt. The cheapest electricity, with the least ecological harm, is what you never produce, because it's not needed. Economic studies

Erich Jacoby-Hawkins
ROOT ISSUES

continue to show negawatts (conservation or efficiency) cost less than any new electricity supply: renewable, fossil fuel or nuclear.

But since governments and utilities have been slow to adopt this concept, private companies are starting to fill the niche. Toronto's Lowfoot, launched in 2010, is a pioneer. It accesses your Smart Meter records to see how much electricity you normally use. Then, if you meet monthly conservation targets below this baseline, they

pay you.

You win when you use less electricity overall or shift your use from peak times to off-peak. Either way, you're saving the province the cost of building new generation, lowering your own bill and pocketing a tip.

But who's paying? That's the new part. Since this summer, Lowfoot has been selling these 'negawatts', or saved electricity, to sponsors concerned about their own footprint. After reducing their own energy demand, sponsors offset remaining use by paying you to use less. Your diligent efforts to shrink your footprint earn you cash rewards. It's like saving money twice by saving electricity once.

Sponsors so far have included software outfit Bluenotion, marketing company Hypenotic, law firm Baker & McKenzie, and

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enviro-job service WorkCabin. Each has bought negawatt savings from Lowfoot members like me.

There's nothing to lose by signing up — no cost to join, and no penalty if you don't make your target. But when you do save, you profit.

Another Toronto outfit called the Climate Shop has a similar program, except you earn either Aeroplan miles or donations to the United Way in your name.

Myself, I'll take the cash. Lowfoot has rapidly expanded its market, from the initial 2.4 million eligible households in

Ontario to more than five million in northern California, more than six million in Texas, even thousands in Alberta (a.k.a. Texas north), and soon millions more in British Columbia.

You could be the next client to do well by doing good through this Canadian innovation.

Help the Earth, save money, get paid — get to it!

Erich Jacoby-Hawkins is an educator, father, volunteer and politician. Comment on this and other Root Issues at www.ErichTheGreen.ca.