

Burlington in for a great election

It's just over six weeks until the registration deadline for candidates in the Nov. 13 municipal election.

Unlike Hamilton's election, so far Burlington's is a hot-ticket item, with 25 candidates already for its seven council seats, but no school board activity — five candidates for four public board seats, and two for the three Catholic seats. Former MP and MPP Gary Carr is still alone in his campaign for Halton regional chair.

One thing is certain — few are likely to disregard campaign contribution limits, given the problems still facing Hamilton's mayor and other candidates from the 2003 election. (One Burlington candidate, Peter Thoem, has already declared that he will not be accepting contributions from property developers).

Burlington already has four mayoral candidates: lawyer Rick Burgess, student Stephen Kolcun, Councillor Joan Lougheed, and owner of California Hair Works, Philip Papadopoulos. All have websites — three very



JOAN LITTLE

informative. Local scuttlebutt is that MPP Cam Jackson will throw his hat in the ring in late September (the legislature resumes sitting Sept. 25), and that he has anointed Blair Lancaster to seek the provincial Conservative nomination to replace him. If he does seek the mayoralty partway through his provincial term, he will force a costly byelection.

While Mayor Rob MacIsaac is retiring, all councillors are running, and five hopefuls already have good websites — Judy Morrison and Peter Thoem in Ward 2, Rick Goldring and

Marnie Mellish in Ward 5, and Catherine Brady in Ward 6.

There are two "open" wards. Lougheed is vacating downtown Ward 2 to seek the mayoralty.

Ward 5 in southeast Burlington was filled on an interim basis by Councillor Bob Wood, following the late-term defection of Mike Wallace to the federal scene.

Ward 2 has four candidates: Cheryl Craig Careers' owner Cheryl Craig, community advocate Anne Marsden, former CBC journalist Judy Morrison, and realtor Peter Thoem. Craig ran in 2000, but didn't file a financial statement. It bothers me that the election disclosure rules weren't respected. The penalty is disqualification from running in the next election; so she was ineligible in 2003. Marsden runs in most elections, and has sought the top city and regional posts.

The other open seat, in southeast Ward 5, has amassed seven candidates to date: lawyer Bill Bastien, director of a nonprofit youth employment agency

Casey Cosgrove, financial planner Rick Goldring, law clerk Marnie Mellish, development adviser Jeff Rottar, development project consultant Sam Sarraf, and paralegal/mediator Fred Suter.

Ward 1 Councillor Rick Craven faces two challengers — insurance broker Mark Preston and freelance writer Marianne Meed Ward. North central Ward 3's John Taylor is opposed by casino worker Lisa Cooper and student James Toplak.

Jack Dennison, in south central Ward 4, is up against business consultant Frank McKeown. Another candidate, lawyer Brian Heagle, withdrew, and announced he was seeking the provincial Liberal nomination. In northeast Ward 6, incumbent Carol D'Amelio faces her former campaign manager and community volunteer, Catherine Brady.

Many candidates are already hard at work, canvassing, doing their homework, and showing up at committee meetings and special-purpose events

throughout the city. Good for them!

Some are impressive. Please, may community groups recognize that, and host candidate debates in the wards so residents can evaluate and compare. It would be such a welcome service to residents.

It's also worth bookmarking Burlington's website. The city encourages candidate biographies at www.burlington.ca. This home page has a quick link, "2006 Municipal Election", where bios and websites are posted.

Burlington's yawn of 2003 featured three acclamations, and an incredibly poor 16.5 per cent voter turnout. Not this year!

Citizens are in for a great election, and a wholesale change which will see a new mayor, and at least two new councillors.

We all have a chance to make a real difference this election.

Freelance columnist Joan Little is a former Burlington alderman.

Deconstructing Bob Rae

Political mythmaking, Ontario style

BY TIM ARMSTRONG

The drumbeat theme of those opposing Bob Rae's Liberal leadership candidacy is, "A smart guy, with a terrible record as premier of Ontario." It's difficult to fathom whether this myth is the product of ignorance, malice, or both.

I was appointed as a Deputy Minister by Premier Davis and served under him and his three successors, Premiers Peterson, Miller and Rae. None of those premiers would claim to have achieved perfection. But the suggestion that the Rae government did not live up to — and in some areas exceeded — the standards and accomplishments of its predecessors on behalf of the people of Ontario is untrue.

When Bob Rae assumed office, the province was faced with an economic crisis — a deepening recession, unprecedented competitive challenges from a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S., high interest rates, an overvalued dollar and a budget deficit of several billion dollars rather than the surplus predicted by the prior administration. Over 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost between 1989 and 1992.

When the Rae government approached the end of its term, Ontario led the way in growth among the provinces and had one of the strongest economies in the G7. Surveys showed strong consumer and business confidence.

Private sector investment was back with billions in capital spending. Labour productivity was at an all-time high, as were manufacturing exports. Health-care costs were under much improved control as part of a broader strategy that was reducing the deficit.

My most memorable work with Premier Rae involved the restructuring of Algoma Steel in Sudbury and Dehavilland Aircraft in Downsview. From the outset, the premier made it clear that he was determined, in the interests of the employees, the affected communities, and the provincial economy, that both companies would survive. His personal efforts in achieving success exceeded, in dedication, intelligence and shrewd negotiating skills, anything that I had previously experienced.

The costs incurred by Ontario in these restructurings, as well as those extracted from the federal government, have been recovered, many times over, in tax revenues alone. And the dismal alternatives to success — weeds in the



Ben Lafontaine / artisans

companies' parking lots, padlocks on their gates, and thousands of discouraged unemployed workers, their families on welfare or seeking social assistance — were all avoided. These achievements were repeated, at Spruce Falls Pulp & Paper in Kapuskasing and other communities across the province, under the Manufacturing Recovery Program, a program designed and implemented with the full involvement of the Premier.

Bob Rae was, from the outset, under attack from many in the business community. After taking office, he faced vigorous opposition from organized labour, principally for his efforts to curtail what he perceived to be excessive wage demands and his commitment to share the necessary cuts in government spending fairly. In my experience in the labour relations field, if you displease both labour and management, you are likely on the right path.

There were other noteworthy achievements during this time. The Rae government successfully promoted the Jobs Ontario program, with increased investment in child care and training; incentives to employers to hire people on welfare and those whose employment insurance had run out; the elimination of payroll taxes on any new employee hired — policies that, combined, created in excess of 50,000 jobs.

Ontario's welfare system was renewed, focusing on the needs of children living in poverty; the child-care budget was expanded; hundreds of thousands of poor families were removed from income tax rolls; and the new Trillium Drug Plan gave affordable access to all in need of therapeutic drugs.

The Rae government placed a renewed emphasis on aboriginal affairs, leading to the first Statement of Political Relationship between a provincial government and aboriginal leadership, acknowledging the need for government-to-government relations and providing new funding to address native poverty, with emphasis on housing, child care and improved sewer and water facilities.

Finally, as premier, Bob Rae held a deep commitment to the success of our federal system, and in particular, one that would accommodate Quebec's goals and aspirations, without jeopardizing Canadian national unity. He played a leadership role with the First Ministers that produced an affirmative vote in Ontario on the national referendum on the Charlottetown Accord.

Many other reforms were set in motion, many of which have been continued by successive governments. As to the Liberal leadership race, may the best candidate win. But in the process, the trumped-up myth that Bob Rae presided over an ineffective government needs to be put to rest.

Tim Armstrong was Ontario's Deputy Minister of Labour and Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology and was the province's Agent General for the Asia-Pacific region, 1986-1990.

Hollywood's muted response to Mel Gibson's rant

BY RUTH MARCUS

WASHINGTON ♦ The interesting thing about Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic tirade doesn't involve Mel Gibson.

The most interesting thing about his outburst was Hollywood's reaction to it — or, more accurately, its cowardly lack thereof.

By Hollywood I mean the entertainment industry, which — Gibson's paranoid rant that "Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world" notwithstanding — is in fact dominated by Jews.

And how did this source of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories respond to Gibson's behaviour? Grudgingly, timidly and inadequately.

Many forces contributed to this muted reaction: the cult of celebrity, sheer avarice, the modern notion that moral failings are a disease to be recovered from. But I think this squeamishness also reflects Hollywood's historically uneasy relationship with its own Jewishness. Better not to make too much of a fuss for fear of calling attention to it.

From the moment Gibson was pulled over, he received the special deference accorded superstars. The Los Angeles County sheriff's spokesperson assured reporters that Gibson was taken into custody "without incident."

The sole studio chief willing to criticize the actor on the record to the Los Angeles Times was Sony Pictures movie chair Amy Pascal — and the furthest she would go was to call Gibson's comments "incredibly disappointing ... especially at this sensitive time."

Disney film chief Oren Aviv, whose studio is releasing Gibson's latest thriller, *Apocalypto*, bumbled to Kim Masters in Slate about his "great relationship" with Gibson. "We all make mistakes and I've accepted his apology to what was a regrettable situation," Aviv said.

The only Hollywood power broker to speak out strongly against Gibson was agent Ari Emanuel, who wrote on the blog Huffington Post that Hollywood should be "shunning Mel Gibson and refusing to work with him, even if it means a sacrifice to their bottom line."

What explains this reticence? A big part, obviously, is money, and the desire not to alienate a powerful Hollywood star and his agent. In Hollywood, a man is judged by his grosses, and Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* grossed more than \$600 million US.

Another is the Hollywood culture of recovery, in which all human failings are understood as diseases that can be treated with a quick trip to rehab. "I believe it was the disease speaking, not the man," said producer Dean Devlin, a Jewish friend who spent the afternoon before the arrest with the actor.

There is also Hollywood's mushy-headed liberalism. "Any types of call of that nature fly in the face of what free speech is," producer Peter Guber told the Washington Post in response to Emanuel's posting. Excuse me: Free speech involves making sure the government doesn't interfere with Gibson's right to make offensive statements — not insisting that Hollywood do deals with bigots.

Imagine if Gibson had assailed African-Americans with the same kind of assault that he unleashed on Jews. His celebrity notwithstanding, I suspect Hollywood would have responded with the outrage it deserved — not with paeans to free speech, psychobabble about healing and an invitation from the rabbi at "the largest entertainment industry synagogue in the United States" to speak at services in his Beverly Hills shul on the Day of Atonement.

The Washington Post

Kids' reading club goes to the heart of UN declaration

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

— The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19

BY AIDAN JOHNSON

Canada has been a model of United Nations ideals since the UN founding. In Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, Canadians are reminded in a particular way of their right to think however they want (and whatever they want, too), the right that the declaration calls the, "freedom of opinion and expression."

This freedom is not only the freedom to "impart," to speak and to write. It is also the freedom to "seek" and, having sought, to "receive" information.

To think and then express — to "seek" and "impart" — are inextricably one responsibility and right. In Canada, that freedom is protected by law. Indeed, our country does more than simply protect that freedom. It actively encourages its exercise.

This is why we have public libraries.

More specifically, this is why we have the children's summer reading program in the public library here in Hamilton. From the time when school lets out for the summer to the time when it resumes, the many shady (I mean wonderfully air-conditioned) library branches provide an array of services particularly designed for youth. (There is also a branch that moves around, the Bookmobile.)

The heart of the summer youth program is the book club. Anyone up to age 12 can come into the library and report to a library worker in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere on a book they have read. There are prizes for reading and these get better and better as one reads more and more. (This cannot be compared to the joy that gets deeper and deeper the more thoughtfully and thoroughly one reads, but the parallel is almost there.)

A different club exists for teenagers, who are asked to write out a minimal description of their book on a ballot for a chance to win prizes.

As an alumnus of the club and former club co-manager at the Terryberry Public Library on the Mountain, I can attest to the power of the club to encourage and impart love of reading.

The program is free and runs all summer and it is never too late to join. Though writers are necessarily

readers, readers are not necessarily writers. That is fine. At the same time, when we "seek ... ideas" (to use the UN words), and particularly when we "seek" books (the source of ideas most necessary for responsible citizenship), we also take on an ethical responsibility to "impart", to "express" what we have learned.

And because readers are not necessarily writers, this "imparting" of what we read does not have to be through writing or even, for that matter, through speaking. Actions can speak louder than words, particularly when informed by thoughtfully absorbed words in the first place.

Of course, in the summer reading program, the responsibility of young readers to share what they have "received" plays out most directly in speaking. The members have a responsibility to provide a report to the library worker (describing their favourite part or a part they found boring and, ideally, why). This is an exercise of freedom of expression.

But the exercise is not just in the conversation the young reader has about the book. The action also consists in subtle parts: the actual going to the library, the signing out of books, the waiting in line for one's turn to report. Exercising the freedom of expression, to "seek" and "receive," is

not all about grand gestures.

Of course, in Canada, to be a part of a library community is a pretty normal activity and that is part of the point.

In Canada, our basic exercise and thus our protection and promotion of basic human rights is everyday.

When the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the General Assembly called on its member countries, "to cause (the Declaration) to be disseminated, displayed, read, and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions ..."

But "to be disseminated, displayed, read, and expounded," (savour that great list of words!), the declaration already needs the implementation of one of its own ideas: Article 19, the idea that "(e)veryone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression."

For without this freedom, there can be no dissemination, expounding, or display — at least not of things that matter. That there can be no significant reading without this freedom and, of course, no children's reading club at the Hamilton Public Library, goes, as it were, without saying.

Aidan Johnson is a Century Fellow PhD student at the University of Chicago and former member of The Hamilton Spectator Community Editorial Board.