



# GUELPH MERCURY

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## Good to see hydro is still committed

Even though Guelph Hydro disbanded its retailing and renewable energy arm Selectpower last year, it's good to see the energy provider still has an interest in furthering and growing renewable energy sources.

The energy firm announced it will provide \$1,500 over three years to the owner of Sunpark Energy Corp. who is looking to set up Canada's first solar energy park at an old dump or industrial site. The move will appease those who think Guelph Hydro's decision to shut down its arm that sold wind power meant it was getting out of renewable energy sources altogether. It seems Guelph Hydro continues to make a concerted effort to promote wind and sun energy — late last year the company endorsed the work of Bullfrog Power, which now offers wind power to Guelph electricity users — and this latest move shows renewable energy is still on the radar here, even if the delivery method has changed.

Richard Mash, a Rockwood man who is the park's developer, is looking for 100 corporations to give \$5,000 each over three years and individuals who will donate \$25, the cost of a solar cell. So far, he's got about 20 companies either interested or committed and about 1,200 individuals have made donations. Guelph Hydro's Peter Henderson said renewable energy, including that from solar power, will play a significant role in future energy production. It must if we are to get away from coal-burning power plants. And there is an appetite for such power.

Before Guelph Hydro shut down Selectpower, there was interest in its wind power, even if it couldn't generate a profit. Numerous businesses were operating on wind power, some of them using that renewable source entirely, and hundreds of homeowners were paying a little bit extra every bill to have the equivalent of 10 per cent of their household power use generated by wind turbines at a farm in the Bruce Peninsula. Selectpower also donated wind power to the Hillside Festival and the Guelph International Film Festival to run their operations in an environmentally friendly manner. At the former Eastview landfill site, Guelph Hydro and the city set up a methane gas generating station, pumping out enough energy to power 1,000 homes, and the use of the methane that would otherwise be burned off is equivalent to taking 22,247 cars off the road in a year.

Solar power is free to harness and has no harmful emissions. Many people install solar panels on their homes to power a light or two, but large-scale solar farm development is a step we must take, along with wind power, to increase our dependence on renewable energy sources. It is something we can all feel good about.

## Our most recognizable symbol

Some American tourists strap it to their bags in foreign countries. Some people are tasked with lowering it when there is a monumental national death. Some drape themselves in it when our team plays at — and wins — the world junior hockey championships. It is the Canadian flag. It is our symbol of pride. But it is also just a flag to many people, something that we simply see and fail to understand the symbolism and history in. It is for that reason that we are grateful there are so many willing to further the history of the flag and make sure we celebrate it every February.

This year, like every year, students at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic high school celebrated flag day with an appearance by a celebrity. Yesterday, on National Flag Day of Canada, it was Ken Danby. In previous years it's been rocker Tom Cochrane, peacekeeper Sergeant Mary Bornyi of the 11th Field Regiment and former premier Bill Davis. At St. Peter Catholic School yesterday students welcomed two Canadian soldiers just back from Afghanistan to honour the day our flag was first raised on Parliament Hill.

We have holidays that mark our history: Canada Day, Victoria Day and the civic holiday in August — which in Guelph will soon be celebrated as John Galt Day. Many have suggested that Sir John A. Macdonald's birthday in January also be a national holiday, like George Washington's birthday is south of the border. Flag Day may not attract the same attention, but it took a long time for the day to even be recognized as one we should, well, recognize. While the flag was raised in 1965, Ottawa waited until 1996 to sign a declaration marking Feb. 15 as Flag Day.

Our flag is remembered by its simplicity. It is known around the world as the sign of polite and caring people. In Afghanistan right now, school children recognize the flag on the soldiers' uniforms as a friendly symbol. It hangs outside corporate buildings, legislatures and schools every day, but how often do we look up and remember what it means to wear and carry that flag. It's something we must all endeavour to do.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Being a council member should be an honour

Dear Editor:

The warden and council of Wellington Country voted themselves a salary increase of 70 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, as well as other fringe benefits.

This hijacking of taxpayers' funds is one of the first actions of the new warden and council of Wellington County.

There is a minority of council who voted against the motion, but the rest of the council members knew what the remuneration was before the run for office, and it must have been sufficient.

But that was then and this is now. The present warden and most of his council could not resist the freedom to enrich themselves at the taxpayers' expense.

Not that such an enormous rise in remuneration would ever be justified, but a better decision would have been to defer the increase for the next council, as the city council of Guelph did.

It used to be an honour to serve in a position of trust, like warden and council member; that is why that kind of remuneration was known as an honorarium.

I noticed our new mayor of the township of Guelph/Eramosa voted, "yes" for the windfall. Shame on him, because when he was campaigning for office last fall, he did not tell me, nor anyone else, that he was only running for his personal gain.

I am almost certain that the former mayor of the Township of Guelph/Eramosa, Clint Martin, would have shown more integrity and concern for the taxpayer.

• George Putz  
Guelph

### SEND YOUR LETTERS

We welcome your feedback. All letters will be edited for clarity, style, length and legal concerns. Letters should be no more than 250 words. Letters will be verified. Please include your name, address and daytime phone number.

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## The Internet can easily become a weapon

It is bad enough that students at a Pickering elementary school tripped and taunted a boy who is partly paralyzed because of a stroke he suffered when he was seven years old.

What takes this beyond simple disbelief is the fact that somebody somehow videotaped the bullying incident at the school. And what takes it even further is that somebody posted the video on YouTube, a popular free video-sharing website.

Two significant issues arise in this incident. First, in an era of anti-bullying programs and increased sensitivities, what made these kids think it's OK to bully anyone, much less a child with a disability? And second, what on earth made them think they should go public with their immature, abhorrent and totally unacceptable behaviour?

Similar questions pop up when contemplating the group of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at a Caledon East Catholic high school who made derogatory remarks — including remarks of a sexual nature — about their principal on Facebook, a social networking website. What were they thinking? Maybe the problem is they weren't thinking at all.

### WHATOTHERSSAY

**We need to help our kids understand that what they do online has a wide impact and that there is no privacy in cyberspace. Anybody can see what you do and nothing can ever be truly erased.**

Internet bullying seems both more prevalent and more disturbing. The beauty of it from the bully's perspective is its perceived anonymity. That gives rise to higher levels of both aggressiveness and meanness — people say and do things online they would never say or do in person. For victims, it can be difficult — though not impossible — to identify exactly who started the cyberbullying.

This generation of young people

grew up with computer mice under their fingers. Computers and the Internet are integral parts of their lives, research tools, communications vehicles and entertainment venues they take for granted. But many young people wrongly believe that a) anything goes when you're online and b) privacy exists in cyberspace.

Parents must help their kids understand and accept the limitations of this medium without limits. We need to know what our kids are doing online. It isn't as simple as repeating the "don't give out your phone number" warning; we need to help our kids understand that what they do online has a wide impact and that there is no privacy in cyberspace. Anybody can see what you do and nothing can ever be truly erased.

In the hands of young, impressionable and naive people, the Internet can easily become a weapon. We need to protect our kids — many of whom got lots of extra screen time during snow days this week — from becoming cyber victimizers, cyber victims or both.

• This editorial appeared in the *Hamilton Spectator*.

## Dion could be crushed under the Kyoto battle horse

In a little less than three months, Liberal leader Stéphane Dion has turned his green armour into a straitjacket.

Now that he has led the opposition parties into passing a bill to force the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on the Conservatives, the worst thing that could happen to him would be to win a snap election this spring and then be forced to live by the terms of bill C-288.

A Liberal government would face the stark choice of presiding over a major federal-provincial crisis — the likes of which would make the punctual Ottawa-Quebec blowouts sound like Chinese New Year firecrackers — or owing up to the fact that the bill the party sponsored is a legislative sham, on par with the 1993 Liberal promises to eliminate the GST and renegotiate NAFTA.

It is one thing to want — as do a majority of Canadians — the federal government to act in the spirit of Kyoto, it is another to pretend that any regime can live up to the letter of the protocol without making some highly divisive and costly choices.



**CHANTAL HEBERT**  
NATIONAL AFFAIRS

There is a widespread consensus — stretching way beyond Conservative ranks — that Canada cannot even come close to meeting its Kyoto greenhouse emission reduction objectives in time for the 2012 deadline without launching a major offensive against the energy industry of provinces such as Alberta; and/or inflicting a crippling hit to the already flagging auto industry in Ontario; and/or diverting a debilitating amount of federal resources to a single cause.

And that, in turn, means the other parties have Dion exactly where they want him, stripped of his environmen-

tal edge in the lead-up to a possible election.

Nothing now distinguishes the Liberal bottom line on climate change from that of the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party. Dion is as saddled to the moribund Kyoto battle horse as Gilles Duceppe, Jack Layton and Elizabeth May. More so than any of them though, he could be crushed under its weight in the next election.

Among the opposition leaders, only Dion — who sat for a decade in government — stands to be called to account for how far behind Canada has fallen on the road to Kyoto.

Bill C-288 ensures that the lacklustre Liberal performance on Kyoto will be as much a part of the picture of the next campaign as the Conservatives' belated conversion to a greener agenda.

Because Dion alone among the opposition leaders can realistically aspire to become prime minister; it is also on him that the onus of squaring what has now become a less than virtuous circle will fall in the next campaign.

That will be particularly hard in some sections of Western Canada and it won't be easy anywhere else.

Liberal economic and social promises will have to be tailored to Dion's professed commitment to Kyoto or else risk failing the test of fiscal responsibility.

The Liberal climate change agenda will also be measured against the green makeover of the government. By backing Kyoto to the hilt, Dion may have tilted the balance of credibility to Harper's advantage. The Conservatives could be one environmental package away from wresting the upper hand from the Liberals.

Such a package is expected to come at the end of March.

Last fall, the government's first green plan failed to meet the minimal test of expectations.

Back then, the government left its flank wide open on climate change.

This time, Harper knows that anything less than a substantial step in the right direction will not pass muster.

The government's upcoming environmental package is part of a set of

blocks the Conservatives are putting in place with an eye to an election.

The re-election of federalist premier Jean Charest next month is another big piece of their puzzle.

Conservative numbers are improving in Ontario; satisfaction with the government is up in Quebec.

If all his blocks fall in place, Harper could emerge from next month's budget with enough momentum to win another election.

Does that mean a spring federal vote is inevitable? Not necessarily.

It is still far from clear that an election over the first half of this year would yield the majority Harper is striving for.

Part of the current Conservative election sabre-rattling is undoubtedly designed to force the opposition to think twice about bringing down the government.

The Bloc Québécois, for one, may do just that if its Parti Québécois ally goes down to defeat in Quebec next month.

• Chantal Hebert writes on national affairs for Torstar News Service.