

## THE RECORD



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## Keep doors open on new library

Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr has moved swiftly to prevent a public relations nightmare for the city from developing. At this week's council meeting, the mayor offered a different view of the way the city will plan its new library from the way that was emerging.

Zehr was responding to a reasonable complaint from William Kennaley that this project was proceeding in a secretive manner. Kennaley's opinion made sense because it was based on comments offered by Hans Pottkamper, a member of the committee planning the new library. Pottkamper said the meetings are all confidential and that they've been "pretty confidential from Day 1."

That approach, if allowed to continue, would undermine public confidence in the entire project, just as secrecy about the plan to demolish the old city hall haunted the city a generation ago.

There may be a few preliminary discussions about the reliability of potential developers that quite legitimately should remain confidential. This, however, is far from the perception Pottkamper created when he expressed his support for closed-door meetings.

Zehr said Kennaley's concern about private meetings was not based on facts, and he asked chief administrative officer Carla Ladd to say how the public would be involved. She explained that the committee was looking into this subject and considering regular public meetings.

That is exactly what the committee should do. The new library, to be built just east of City Hall, is of particular interest to Kitchener residents for several reasons. Not only is the library going to cost between \$44 million and \$51 million, it is also an institution that thousands of Kitchener residents will use for decades. The people who are financially behind this project — and that means the taxpayers of Kitchener — deserve to know as much about this project as can possibly be revealed. It's their project; it's their money.

Kennaley, the citizen who was concerned about secrecy, did not seem completely convinced that the committee will be as open as the mayor expects. "Well, I guess the best thing I can say is the proof will be in the pudding, or in the eating, as they say," he said. Fair point.

Considering that Pottkamper had acknowledged that the project has been "pretty confidential from Day 1," it is up to the committee to show that all controversial questions are brought before the public.

This new library presents Kitchener with a wonderful opportunity to build another superb cultural institution. Council shouldn't jeopardize the opportunity by closing the doors on the public.

## Kent served this region

In Cambridge, Fred Kent wasn't known as "Coun. Kent" or even "Mr. Kent." He was known as "Fred."

Kent, who died on the weekend at the age of 79, was elected to serve on Cambridge or regional council 12 times. His long political career may be attributed to his reputation of being a true representative of the people. He did not reign over people; he was one of the people who regarded serving others as his duty.

Kent's interest in serving came out most sharply in his ability to listen. Unlike some political leaders who may automatically know what they want to do and proceed regardless of the arguments raised against them, Kent was a good listener. He wanted to hear the two sides of an issue, or more if it were a complicated case.

When confronting complex issues — and surely many issues a council deals with are grey rather than black and white — he would mentally wrestle with the arguments. He wanted to make the right decision and tried to please even those with whom he might ultimately have to disagree.

Coming from Cambridge, a city that has at times fiercely proclaimed its independence within Waterloo Region, Kent's balanced, fair-minded style served both his city and the region well. As regional Chairman Ken Seiling has pointed out, Kent could see the "big picture" as well as smaller issues.

Until he retired at the last municipal election, Kent had been a councillor since 1975, the second election held after the formation of Cambridge and the region.

Cambridge Mayor Doug Craig speculated that Kent's string of 12 election victories is a record no other Cambridge politician may ever match. Usually — and understandably — most councillors tire of the political life long before their 12th win. And if they don't tire of it, their constituents often send them into what may be called "forced retirement." More than anything, this long record symbolizes the legacy left by Coun. Kent — or, rather, by "Fred."

## LETTER OF THE DAY

### 'Balanced' school day too unbalanced for me

So the public school board wants to take the current unbalanced school day and turn it into a balanced one. We are told that one of the reasons this is being done is to give teachers an uninterrupted 40 minutes of lunch and/or prep time.

How can this be accomplished when these new breaks are exactly 40 minutes long and the board claims that currently 10 minutes per break are being wasted on dressing/undressing, washroom breaks, etc. We are now down to 30 minutes, and isn't this what the teachers were going to strike for?

With the current one hour for lunch, it seems to me there is a better chance to get in these 40 minutes. And does the board honestly think the kids are going to eat healthier? If my kids are going to eat two lunches/snacks five days a week, then what do I do for them on the weekend?

The board is also saying there will be an increase of physical activity during this new schedule. As it stands now, the

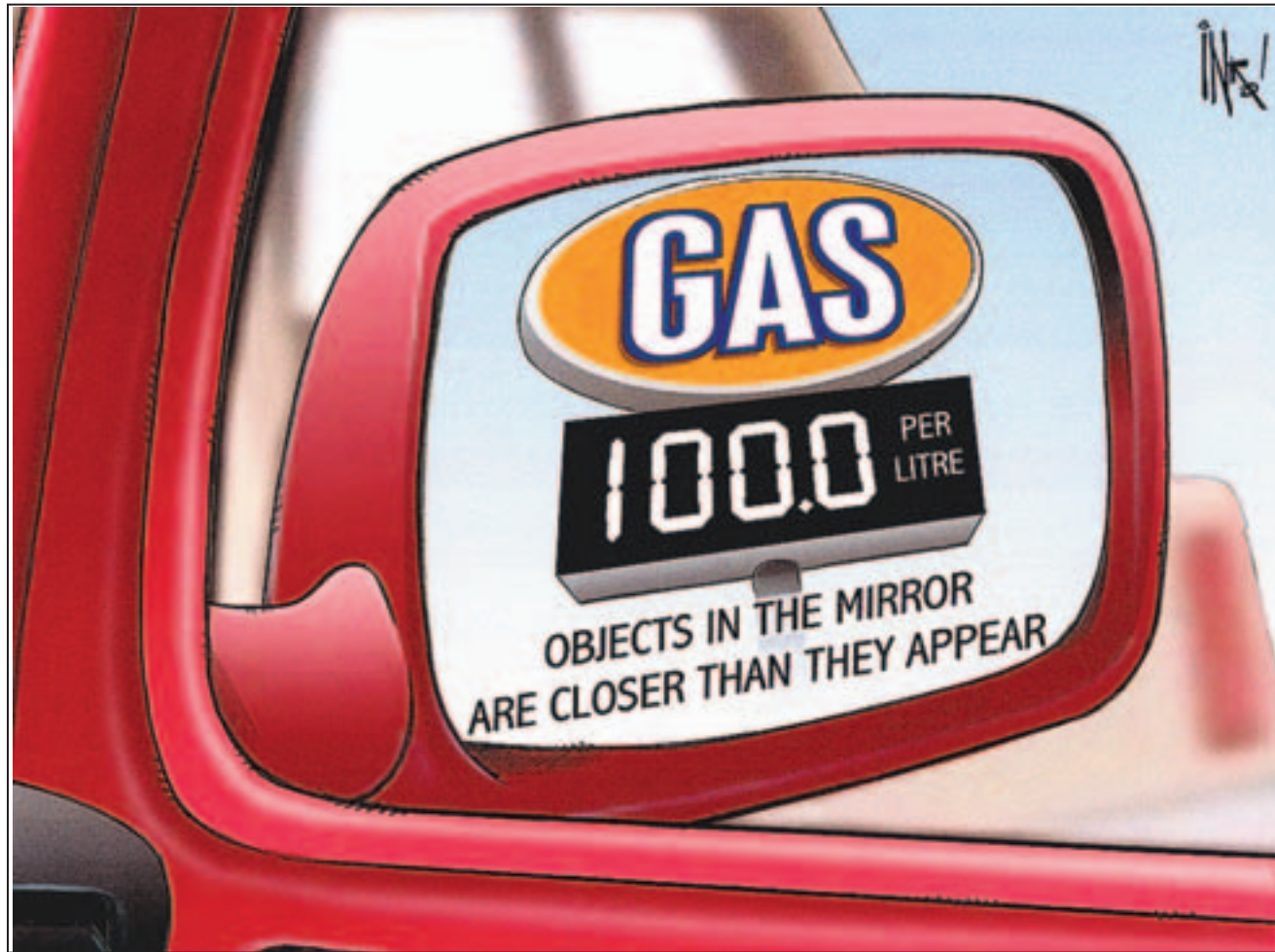
children have two 15-minute recesses and 30 minutes at noon for a total of 60 minutes. But the new schedule will give them two 20-minute breaks for a total of 40 minutes. Is this the new math?

I wonder how teachers would feel if the school year was to be changed to 12 months long and they had no say in the matter? Teachers, brand new to the profession or seasoned veterans, get eight weeks off in the summer, two weeks at Christmas and one week at March break, for a total of 11 weeks per year. It would take me 45 years at my job just to get to that 11th week.

My advice to the board and teachers would be to suck up these 10 minutes and keep things as they are.

Most of us are revolving around their schedules enough. As for me, I vote to stay "unbalanced" in order to be "balanced."

•Paul Lanteigne  
Kitchener



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Expectant mothers shouldn't need permits

I am writing in response to yesterday's letter to the editor by Jacqueline Strub: Get A Disabled Permit.

While I agree that our elderly citizens could benefit from more disabled parking spots, I also have to disagree that an expectant mother should apply for a disability permit.

As a mother with young children and also expecting another child, I usually opt for the parking space near a cart return, for convenience and because the few spots that are available for expectant mothers are taken.

The problem that I see with expectant mothers getting permits is there are so many expectant mothers. You are asking for even more problems. Who is going to regulate the use of them, make sure that they are given back, etc? Now the government has to create another job? Good luck.

Why not ask John Q. Public to park at the back of the lot and save the closer non-marked spots for our elderly?

And why would anyone say an expectant mother is temporarily disabled?

•Karen Boniface  
Waterloo

### Play was outstanding

After seeing a play at the Registry Theatre in Kitchener recently, I was reflecting on the nature of human interaction and how fragile the relationship is when we cannot open up our hearts and minds to different cultures.

MT Space, a multicultural theatre company, had presented a provocative and thoughtful workshop on immigration and the implications of culture shock, alienation and prejudice on people who have immigrated from many different countries.

The product of seven intense weeks

of preparation and improvisation by the cast and writers, and drawn from real life stories of immigration, this production literally takes your breath away.

For me, this is art at its best that is both entertaining and provocative, with sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle ideas that often run counter to the average person's perception of Canadian culture — particularly Canadians' idea of fairness in dealing with people from other cultures.

Bravo to MT Space and their cast, crew and producers.

•Ron MacPherson  
Cambridge

### Send council to school

Why don't we look at Galt Collegiate Institute to be Cambridge's new city hall in the event that the high school doesn't have enough students in the future?

•Peter Lass  
Cambridge

### Stop wasting water

Fresh water is a necessity of life for all living things. Here in Canada, we have one of the world's largest supplies of fresh water. We need it for drinking, cooking, washing, growing our food and running our economy.

My father told me 50 years ago that during my lifetime I would see restrictions on our fresh water and friendly neighbours in conflict.

He also said my grandchildren would see a war between our neighbouring country over Canada's fresh water because it will be worth more than oil, land or gold.

Well, take a look. We now have water police. Should we be alarmed at the waste and shortage we are creating with our fresh water? You bet your life you should.

Backyard pools are one waste of

our water. It is not a necessity. Maybe these owners should have to pay trucks to bring the water.

Remember the old saying: Water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink.

•Elizabeth Crocker  
Kitchener

### Save energy, drop the tie

The suit and tie as standard attire for businessmen in Japan may soon be on its way out. While such a move might come as a blow to the sensitivities of hierarchy-minded Japanese society, these sartorial stipulations are seen as a way to conserve energy and fight global warming.

In order to fulfil Kyoto Protocol requirements, the Japanese environment ministry has taken aim at office air conditioner thermostat settings. It calculates that by allowing inside temperatures to climb from 25 to 28 C during the hot summer months, when outside temperatures can hit 40 C, more than 300 million litres of oil can be saved, thus also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The new cooler way of dressing for the office is being promoted by a media campaign through posters and newspaper ads.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi set an example by appearing at a June 1 cabinet meeting without a tie and with only a blue shirt carelessly hanging over his pants.

One can only wonder what kind of bureaucratic fashion revolution the winter months will usher in.

In any case, I think Canadian businessmen and politicians should also abandon the suit and tie. Those addicted to this ridiculous way of dressing can do so in the privacy of their own homes.

•Werner Broschinski  
RR 1, Princeton

## Harper squanders chance to beat Martin

If there was a Hail Mary pass for Paul Martin's minority government this past spring, it came and went long before this week, back at the time when the prime minister negotiated a new budget with the NDP.

Had Conservative Leader Stephen Harper turned his guns squarely on the NDP/Liberal deal there and then, chances are he would have had the Liberals on the run.

What is certain is that he would have exposed a government making up policy on the fly. Everything about the budget deal smacked of a plan drafted on a table napkin.

For days, the various ministers who were the beneficiaries of NDP-inspired largesses were not completely in the loop as to what it was their departments were getting.

The finance department routinely locks up the national media and the country's financial pundits for the better part of a business day to walk them through even the most simplistic budget plan but, in this case, its spin doctors went into hibernation.

Forced to eat his own so very recent words as to the inappropriateness of



CHANTAL HEBERT

the budget demands of the NDP, Finance Minister Ralph Goodale originally paid little more than lip service to the startling developments unfolding on his watch.

It was left to NDP Leader Jack Layton to brief the country on the new directions of the government.

The Bloc Quebecois had no interest in pursuing the NDP deal. That would only have raised questions as to why the sovereigntist party opposed measures that would normally have been attractive to the bulk of its supporters.

But Harper would have had compelling reasons to quickly move his guns from the front of government ethics to that of Liberal budget-making.

As popular as some of the add-ons

of the NDP might have been with progressive voters, they were bound to jolt many of the small-c conservative voters who supported Martin to the detriment of the Conservatives last year.

Fiscal conservative voters tipped the balance in the last election. They stand to do so again in the next one.

It is one thing for them to know that Liberals campaign from the left and govern from the right and quite another to watch the government change gears right in the middle of a budget debate.

But instead, Harper chose to play innuendo upon innuendo of inside baseball, concentrating his forces on the sponsorship front.

### ELASTIC CONSCIENCE

Worse, given a chance to offer Canadians a contrast between the Liberals' elastic budget conscience and a more disciplined approach to fiscal policy, Harper chose instead to match the Liberals promise for promise.

The NDP/Liberal budget deal did shift the focus of the debate away from raw anger at the Liberals and on to a more sober examination of the alter-

natives on hand, but there was no reason for Canadians to find nothing substantial in the Conservative window.

The greatest irony is that Harper, who professes so much disdain for the parliamentary press gallery, played to it rather than to the larger audience.

Rightly or wrongly, the sense that the minority government deserved to face the immediate wrath of voters always ran stronger on Parliament Hill than with the public.

Over the past spring, the biggest divide on the Canadian landscape has not been the split between regions of the country, but rather the psychological gap between election-happy Parliament Hill insiders — including the media — and the majority of Canadians who simply would not be rushed to the polls.

In the end, Harper squandered his best hand on the inside-the-beltway crowd that he so likes to depict as disconnected from the real Canada. It must gall him to discover that, at least on the latter, his gut instincts were dead on.

•Chantal Hebert covers national issues.

## WRITE TO US

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