

York-Simcoe Liberal speaks against new seat distribution

By Bill Rea

Judith Moses, Liberal candidate for the federal riding of York-Simcoe, is opposed to the Conservative government's bill for the redistribution of seats in the House of Commons.

Moses stated the plan unfairly discriminates against both York-Simcoe and Ontario voters.

"Under this bill, voters in York-Simcoe will enjoy less democratic rights than those in other provinces," Moses said.

Under the proposed redistribution, British Columbia and Alberta will receive enough new seats to reflect their growth and proportion of Canada's population, she stated. Ontario, by contrast, is to receive significantly fewer new seats than its share of Canada's population should merit. It would see Ontario get 10 more seats, while British Columbia is slated to get an additional seven representatives and Alberta is to get another five.

That's not fair, according to Premier Dalton McGuinty, who's been maintaining Ontario will be 11 seats short of where it should be in the new House configuration. He's been letting the feds know that, but York-Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan, who is also Minister Responsible for Democratic Reform, is defending the move.

"It's an unusual argument, because we are giving Ontario more seats," Van Loan commented last week, adding McGuinty has never raised a fuss before over Ontario being under-represented. He also pointed out the premier had approved an extra seat in the provincial legislature for Northern Ontario, contrary to the concept of representation by population.

He was also quoted in the media as referring to McGuinty as "the small man of confederation."

For Moses, Van Loan's comments were inappropriate and help contribute toward lowering the tone of public debate in Canada.

"For me, those who hold public office have a duty to respect the people who elected them," she added. "Van Loan's insulting comments demonstrate a tremendous disrespect for Ontario voters as well as for the duly elected premier. There is no question that under the proposed seat redistribution Ontario voters will be significantly under-represented in the House of Commons. It's an issue of basic fairness for Ontario voters."

Moses stated she intends to pursue this issue further in order to get straight answers from the government for the people of York-Simcoe and Ontario.

"There are basic questions that need answering," she said. "Why is the government of Stephen Harper treating Ontario differently than the other provinces? And why is the MP for York-Simcoe and the sponsor of this bill sinking to personal attacks in an effort to defend a plan that discriminates against the very voters he claims to represent?"

Simpsons movie and Christmas storytime plans

The Innisfil Public Library's Cookstown branch will be holding special holiday events in the upcoming weeks.

The first, a family storytime session for all ages accompanied by a caregiver will take place Dec. 12 at 10:15 a.m.

Holiday storytime for independent three to five year olds will take place Dec. 13 from 1:45 to 2:30 p.m. Pre-registration for both events is required. Please call 458-1273 for more details.

The branch will also host a screening of The Simpsons Movie Dec. 1 at 1 p.m.

Tickets are \$2 each, while refreshments cost \$1.

Hall fees waived for charities

By Chris Simon

Non-profit groups can kiss their rental fees goodbye.

Innisfil council approved a proposed new policy for banquet hall and public community room rentals, which includes the waiving of user fees for non-profit organizations that benefit the town.

The policy review comes after council noticed a non-profit organization was being charged a different user rate than all other groups.

"The adoption of the community room rental policy (will) provide a

consistent level of service delivery to Innisfil residents," said town parks and recreation manager Robert Browne in a report to council.

"Community groups that provide benefit to Innisfil should not be required to pay for meeting room space."

Once the town's new administration centre and Cookstown library and community centre is complete, there will be about 12 publicly-owned community rooms available within the municipality.

The town currently charges \$26 per hour for

meeting room rentals, with a mandatory three hour minimum booking.

Non-profit groups will get free meeting space because of their service to the community, said Browne.

"The availability of the free public community room rental at the town hall could be evaluated after one year to address any unforeseen issues," he said.

"The purpose of this policy is to identify the guidelines under which the town public community rooms may be rented to the public."

As part of the review,

staff compared rental rates with facilities in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Barrie and Essa Township. In Bradford, meeting rates are \$35 for two hours, or \$50 for four.

Essa rates range from free access to public meeting rooms for small not-for-profit groups, to \$85.45 per hour for non residents.

Barrie charges \$21 per hour for non-profit groups and \$50 per hour for every other organization. However, the city requires a minimum three hour rental at all of its meeting room facilities.

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