

# THE FREE PRESS OPINION

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"The theory of a free press is that the truth will emerge from free reporting and free discussion." Walter Lippman

## THE PRINCE GEORGE FREE PRESS

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## Councillors deserve raise

As the election was drawing near this past November, the then-city councillors deferred dealing with a plan that would have increased the salary the city pays them. Didn't think the timing was good, worried about the message it would send in bad economic times and didn't want to face the fallout during an election campaign.

On Monday night, though, the new council didn't have the same qualms and passed the motion to give councillors a seven per cent raise.

Some councillors worried the pay hike to \$18,900 a year would attract the wrong candidates to council. "We shouldn't be here for that compensation and in fact the more that becomes the case the more we will get politicians instead of elected representatives," said Councillor Dan Rogers.

But we disagree with Mr. Rogers.

Councillors work very hard for little pay and under-\$20,000 a year will not accurately cover the time they spend on city business. Critics will argue they knew what they were getting into and the work shouldn't be about money.

But consider this: how many city councillors are, for lack of a better term, "working stiffs." Not one.

There is no one from a pulp mill, saw mill or industrial park.

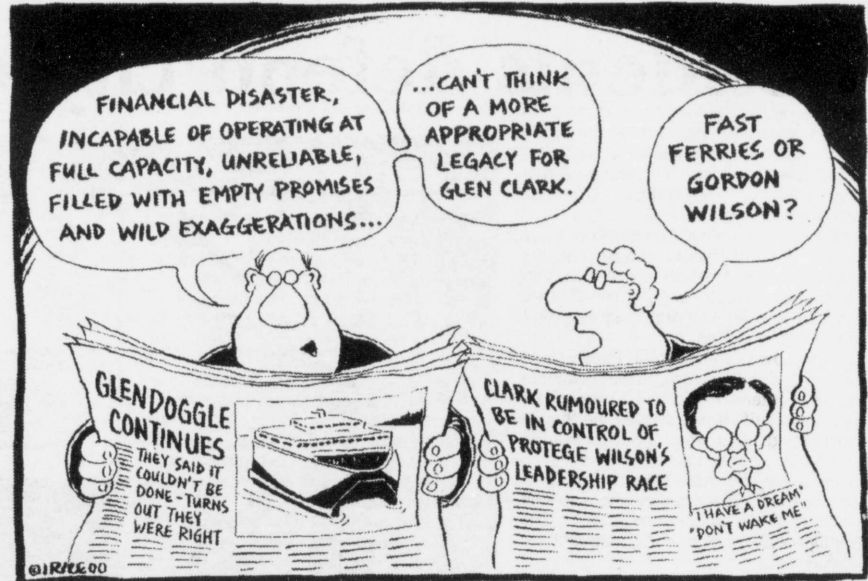
Councillors have tended to be middle-management types or retired. Why? Because they are the only ones who can afford to sit on council.

This raise is just a small way of repaying people's dedication to the city. And, remember, you get what you pay.

Society continues to devalue the worth of politicians, which is why the premier makes less than many school board administrators and the prime minister gets a minor pro hockey salary.

The one thing council did right was not raise the salary of Mayor Colin Kinsley, who brings home a nice cheque.

Council make take criticism for the decision, but that's why they get 'paid the big bucks.'



## Backbencher to boss?

One thing's certain about Dick Harris's stab at the leadership of the Reform party. Prince George is likely to, at least indirectly, receive a lot of attention from a bunch of numb nuts in Ontario who wouldn't have been able to find the city on a map before Mr. Harris announced his intentions.

When you take a stab at the leadership of Reform, you're also metaphorically stabbing its leader Preston Manning. And when you stab the founder of the revolution, you're bound to attract a certain amount of attention.

Mind you, Mr. Harris is acting as though it is Mr. Manning who is doing the stabbing. By acknowledging that the Reform party has gone as far as it's going to go in national politics, Mr. Manning has stuck the knife in the guts of hardworking grassroots Reformers like Mr. Harris. According to Mr. Harris, at least.

As courageous as it may seem for Mr. Harris to then put forward his own name as the saviour of Reform fundamentals, it is also a kamikaze



MCALPINE VIEW

Cam McAlpine

operation — for Mr. Harris and the Reform Party.

Sad to say, Mr. Harris — a man who is both principled and a tireless worker on behalf of his constituency — is an unlikely candidate in a leadership race. (The word "dark horse" comes to mind.) In fact, Mr. Harris stands about as much chance of winning the Reform leadership as Corky Evans has of winning

the NDP's top job. It is so precisely because he is a strong constituency man, and not a national presence.

East of here, Mr. Harris is known as "a backbencher from B.C." Backbenchers have never historically won much of anything.

So, while Mr. Harris's pledge to stand up in back and fight for the Reform Party may be honourable and may garner a few "atta boy" votes from Bill and Mabel in the Back 40, his success will also ensure Reform remains forever a regional entity.

The fact is, Mr. Manning is right on this one. The power and influence that many associated with the united alternative movement bring to the table are what Mr. Manning's struggling opposition must ally itself with if ever it wants to put up the numbers that would prove it is a truly national party.

Even Prince George's other stalwart Reform MP Jay Hill and Chuck Strahl, party whip, agree that it may just be time to change direction.

Says the always blunt Mr. Strahl: "I have to have a close look at it as I don't want to spend the rest of my life in opposition."

Apparently Mr. Harris is content to do just that.

CAM MCALPINE IS THE FORMER EDITOR OF THE FREE PRESS

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