



# GUELPH MERCURY

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## University has many successes

The University of Guelph has never shied away from promoting its successes and celebrating the work of its faculty and students. It always promotes first-place finishes in rankings such as the annual Maclean's university issue and other first-place finishes, whether they be in sports or the research world. It's something that may seem a bit odd for a school in a country where we pride ourselves on being humble and often shy away from sounding our own horn when something good happens. But now, to dispel a national and international perception that the U of G is still only Moo U, the school has branched out even more and launched a national ad campaign to show the country what it's got. And there's nothing wrong with that.

The U of G has always been renowned for its work in the agricultural field. That's where it started, and it's important to not lose sight of this and continue in the manner that has always attracted students and staff from around the world to learn and teach here. The Ontario Veterinary College is well known to people who have animals — whether it be a cat or dog at home or cattle on a farm — and also those who happen to read a story about a racehorse being injured and taken to the OVC for treatment. Faculty there also do research into emerging diseases that pass from animals to humans.

But there are other programs and departments at the school that are gaining a reputation as the place to be. Graduates of the university's hospitality program work in hotels and restaurants around the world. The Scottish studies program boasts the largest Scottish archives outside of that country. Professor Paul Hebert in the department of zoology is an — if not the — international leader in the DNA barcoding of species. And the food science department is always working to increase consumer satisfaction and health. There are obviously many more examples of ways other than agriculture in which the school excels.

U of G image ads running in the Globe and Mail feature former federal environment minister David Anderson, the new head of the school's Institute for the Environment. Another highlights the work of President Alastair Summerlee and his reappointment to the post until 2013, noting that his dedication and vision inspire the community.

The school has every right to boast about its achievements and its continuing work in areas other than agriculture and veterinary medicine. But it should never downplay those areas. Those two schools are substantial parts of the backbone of the school and will continue to draw faculty and students to the school on the hill.

## Franco's is a city institution

With all this talk of mandatory retirement and retirement planning, it seems Franco Figliuzzi could care less about both; his sons are taking over his business and retirement seems worlds away when you love what you do and even talk about going into work after you retire. This is how it should be for all of us.

Forty years ago today, Figliuzzi opened his barber shop on Wellington Street. Over the years it's become a bit of an institution. Last year it hosted the Stanley Cup. It's been home to Franco's friends and co-workers Joe Manno and Arcangelo Di Santo for about the same amount of time long and the shop will continue well into the future as his sons Paul and Claudio have already said they will keep the business going even after their dad hangs up his scissors.

Franco learned his barbering skills when he was a 13-year-old boy in Italy. He's stayed in the trade because of the friendship the job has brought and the ability to talk with people of every age, every day about anything and everything. The shop has also offered Franco the ability to continue a craft that is quickly being lost.

While many young people today see running a family business as a daunting prospect, Franco's sons appreciate the barber trade and want to keep the tradition alive.

Franco has seen changes in the industry over the years. Recently, the public health unit told barbers they had to stop giving straight razor shaves to prevent the potential spread of infection. But through the years it's apparent Franco, his friends and his sons enjoy what they do, and don't continue to work at the shop simply to make a living.

We hope the Franco name lives on for at least another 40 years in Guelph.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't need to give things up to live a satisfying life

Dear Editor:

Re: 'Lenten sacrifices not easy to sell' (Guelph Mercury, Feb. 22).

I read the front-page article about Lenten sacrifices and was left feeling unsettled. I have been a truth seeker all my life and recognize the importance of soul searching and self-examination as a path to spiritual growth and enlightenment.

A general theme in the article seemed to be that not as many people are observing Lent these days because we live in such a materialistic and self-indulgent society. I got the impression that one is either a practising Christian or a self-indulgent and materialistic lost soul — as if these were our only two options.

This "either-or" school of thought needs to be addressed and corrected by those of us who know it not to be true. I am an atheist, after years of study and thought, and I am neither materialistic nor self-indulgent. I am well aware of the influences of the media and, without the guidance of the church, I am able to steer through the barrage of advertising and maintain my values and beliefs.

Through education and mindful awareness I am living a productive and spiritually satisfying life and I am teaching my children to do the same.

And believe it or not, I don't need to give up my Tim Hortons coffee for 40 days to prove it.

• Lyn Kribs  
Guelph

### We need to lobby the government on gas rates

Dear Editor:

So the oil companies are claiming a gas shortage. It's understandable that Imperial Oil has production problems but what about the rest of the companies? Now gas has reached \$1 a litre and I believe the oil companies will maintain these prices and come summertime I bet you will see gas at \$1.50 a litre. Last summer the oil companies justified the high cost at the pumps with speculation of an over-active hurricane season, yet not one hurricane made landfall.

Don't waste your time complaining to your MP as it will only fall on deaf ears. Why would the government restrict such a cash grab when gas prices go up.

It's of no use to complain about it simply because the oil companies and

government know that no matter what we will still pay the price simply because we all rely heavily on our vehicles.

Instead I think that we Canadians should start lobbying the government to start taxing the high profits of these oil companies at a rate that would encourage the oil companies to fluctuate the prices less frequently and without mere speculation of what may or may not affect the industry and put a stop to the blatant rape of the consumer.

• W.C. Keleher  
Kitchener

### 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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## Young soccer player deserves an apology

Like many Canadian kids, Asmahan Mansour plays soccer. The 11-year-old Ottawa girl is also a Muslim. And until this week, the fact that she wears a hijab, or religious head scarf, on the field had never been an issue.

But on Sunday, she was ejected from a game at a tournament in Laval, Que., after the referee decided her hijab was a dangerous safety hazard. Her team, as well as four others, rightly withdrew in protest.

The Quebec Soccer Federation has backed the controversial call. It says the referee, who also is a Muslim, was only enforcing rules set by the Federation Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA, the sport's world governing body. Quebec Premier Jean Charest also waded in, suggesting the referee was right.

### WHATOTHERSSAY

In fact, the opposite is true.

With this absurd ruling, Quebec soccer officials have blatantly violated the long-held Canadian principle that reasonable accommodations should be made for minorities and religious groups.

They also appear to be inexplicably out of step with the rest of the sport at a time when soccer is being promoted to females in Muslim countries around the world.

Claims by Quebec soccer officials that they were following FIFA rules simply do not hold up. The Canadian Soccer Association says neither it nor the world body specifically bans religious headgear.

FIFA's website notes players can wear "nonbasic equipment" as long as it poses no danger. It also features a 2006 article praising Iran's women's national soccer team for hosting its first foreign opponents, noting that while players wore head scarves and long pants, "the mere fact that it took place was rightly hailed as a huge development."

Canada's provincial and national soccer bodies should issue guidelines specifically confirming that hijabs can be worn during games.

And in light of the injustice done to Mansour, Quebec officials should also admit they were wrong and give her the apology she deserves.

• This is an edited version of an editorial that appeared in the Toronto Star.

## Dion needs to be careful about what waters he's fishing in

There is a method, albeit a high-risk one, to what many observers have rightly been tempted to dismiss as the political madness of Stéphane Dion's opening moves as Liberal leader.

Dion — who is known to indulge in a bit of fishing in his spare time — is trolling for Bloc Québécois and NDP votes in the next election.

In this spirit, in the five weeks since the House has come back, the new leader of the official Opposition has systematically dragged his party to the left.

Last month, Dion recommitted his party to the Kyoto Protocol on global warming by advancing a Liberal private member's bill designed to force the federal government to belatedly live up to its obligations under the international treaty.

Last week, he signalled that a Liberal government would not extend Canada's military deployment in Afghanistan — at least under its current shape — beyond the current 2009 deadline.

On Tuesday, the Liberals joined forces with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois to terminate some of the



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more sweeping measures of the federal post-9-11 antiterrorism legislation.

Until this week, Dion had toyed with the idea of joining the other opposition parties in support of a ban on the hiring of replacement workers in the event of strikes in federal-regulated workplaces.

It is all part of an attempt to position his party as the progressive alternative to the Conservatives in time for a campaign that could be only a month or two away.

They want to run in the next campaign on the leadership of the prime minister.

Under the right circumstances, Dion could do worse than to allow the Conservatives to do exactly that.

After a year in office, Harper's decisiveness is both his top asset and his Achilles' heel.

To this day, grudging admiration for his clarity of purpose often turns to apprehension when minds focus on the prospect of putting a prime minister who clearly needs to take lessons in ruthlessness from no one in control of a majority government.

In theory, fear of a Conservative majority could drive left-leaning Bloc sympathizers as well as NDP supporters to the Liberals in the next campaign and take the latter over the top on election day.

In practice though, the costs of the Dion strategy have so far been more apparent than its potential benefits.

As unfairly short as a one-month audition may seem, the past few weeks may have been Dion's last best opportunity to make a positive pre-election impression on voters.

When the House comes back in two weeks, it will be to a federal budget that

could lead to the defeat of the minority government and a campaign in fairly short order.

Through a mix of inexperience, an uneven grasp of English and a certain natural brittleness, Dion's moves have been plagued by poor or clumsy execution.

His dogged advocacy of the Kyoto framework has come perilously close to coming across as a tactic to delay concrete progress on the climate change file.

The debate on the anti-terrorism legislation has allowed him to assert his authority on his caucus but it has also pitted him against some of the top figures of the previous Liberal government, his own members in the Senate, not to mention the families of victims of past terrorist acts.

His policy statement on Afghanistan was overshadowed by Justin Trudeau's announcement that he wanted to run in the next campaign, a decision that clearly inspired little enthusiasm in Quebec Liberal ranks and none in Dion's entourage.

Overall, the Liberal leader emerges from his audition with decisively

mixed reviews. Against the background of an uncertain initial performance, Conservative efforts to define him as a weak leader who is not ready for prime time have paid off.

Polls show that Harper has regained the upper hand on the Liberals, in particular in Ontario.

Dion's efforts have yet to make a significant dent in Bloc and NDP support. At the same time, Harper has advanced the recasting of his government's message on two crucial fronts: the environment and the Afghan mission.

While it makes perfect political sense for the Liberals to want to cast as wide a progressive net as they can in the lead-up to an election, the risk always was that such a fishing expedition leads them adrift of the electoral mainstream.

If he sets his course too sharply to the left, Dion risks overshooting the centre, thus leaving it open for Harper to expand his coalition while the Liberals shrink theirs.

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