

**Stan Morris** Editor  
583-0112, Fax 583-3200,  
mapleleaf@inportdover.com

# VIEWPOINT

## It is important for all qualified voters to cast a ballot

The federal election campaign is quickly coming to a close. The advance polls are over and election day is Monday. Locally, and perhaps nationally as well, there has been no single issue that has everyone talking. An all-candidates meeting in Simcoe drew a large crowd with questions on fighter jets, jobs, CPP reform, taxes and tobacco -- all important issues but not the kinds of things that spur a nation.

For that reason some people have suggested they will not vote on election day. For those who harbour such thoughts, we emphasize that voting is such an important part of how this nation works that it behooves us all to study the alternatives and determine what is best for each of us and then vote.

Some voters have declared that all the party leaders failed to explain their vision for Canada's future resulting in many voters' ho-hum attitude toward going to the polls. However, people who are confused with the bazaar of messages bombarding us all, we remind readers whatever the messenger is saying must be taken at face value, considering of course, what seems believable, then decide what best suits each Canadian's idea of sound leadership, then vote for that candidate in good faith.

An election campaign should be a time for leaders and candidates to explain their party's platform and their vision for our future -- not just faulting other parties. Canada's political leaders are who they are, their names and reputations have been in the forefront. As well, the candidates in this riding can easily be contacted to satisfy concerns before Monday. Do not use lack of knowledge to stay away from voting.

Apathy is not a good alternative. To vote in a federal election (or any election) is a duty that Canadians must take advantage of, in the knowledge people in countries around the world are dying in their attempt to overthrow dictatorships to enable themselves to have democratic elections.

Every vote cast is equal, and each one affects who will govern the nation. The often-repeated saying dating back many years is still true for the May 2, 2011 election "vote as you like, but vote".

## New picnic tables in county parks

Residents and visitors who use the Norfolk County Parks system this spring will notice some new features -- accessible picnic tables. Parks and Facilities Division of Norfolk County partnered with Norfolk County Accessibility Advisory Committee and local business ABEL Enterprises of Simcoe to construct 30 accessible picnic tables to be deployed throughout the parks. The new picnic tables feature a longer table-top allowing persons using wheelchairs, scooters, and other assistive devices to roll up and use the picnic table. A second lot of tables will be prepared later this summer.

The Accessibility Advi-

sory Committee is a Council-appointed committee made up of volunteers, at least 50% whom have a disability. The committee receives an annual budgetary allocation from Norfolk Council to spend on initiatives to improve the accessibility of County facilities, policies, and services. Chair Irene Ramey of the Accessibility Advisory Committee commented, "this project is a great example of a successful partnership between County Staff, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and local business working together to improve access to County services and facilities for all members of the public".



Peter Ramsey (at left) and Tyrone are creating a life-like monkey for Lighthouse Festival Theatre.

## Peter Ramsey A sign of the times



### STAN MORRIS

PETER RAMSEY has his iconic Port Dover works of art all over town. It is impossible not to see them on many storefronts downtown and yet most of us seldom see this local artist of renown. That could be because Peter is very busy creating other objects of art in his studio at 65 Prospect Street. When I visited Peter on Thursday he was painting the face on a monkey he had created. Assisting the artist was another much younger artist -- his son Tyrone, age 32. The two men have created a life-like monkey with a wooden stick spine and a body of papier mache. They told me the happy-faced ape is destined for a production at Lighthouse Festival Theatre.

His work is everywhere. Peter Ramsey created the signage at the Walker Street sidewalk entrance to the Erie Beach Hotel. That large sign features a bigger-than-life carved wooden fisherman with a fishing net standing in a garden that has been admired by passersby since it was installed in 1986. Directly across the street all the Port Dover-inspired interior murals and decorative ceiling at Fisherman's Catch Restaurant are the product of Peter Ramsey's imagination and artistic skill from 1985 and still working on it.

This local artist also gets credit for the signs across the front of Knechtel Foods

building with its lettering and three-dimensional Tundra Swans in flight that were added in 2004. Also the interior murals are a product of his mind and hands. His artistry has adorned the front of The Sandalmaker since 1990 and he created Willies signage in 1992 -- which help set both businesses as being really unique.

"Over the years I have worked on almost every storefront in downtown Port Dover at least once," he told me. When asked which of those was his favourite, he paused for just a moment, then stated "Dover Apothecary" because Mike Marini wanted something 'olde worlde' and that sign conveys this community in its beginning years. He also likes it very much because it was created 21 years ago and has maintained its original look with only an occasional protective coating added.

Another long-lasting Ramsey Main Street decoration is on the Norfolk Tavern & Brig having adorned that historic landmark since 1979. Of course, there are others.

Peter Ramsey is a man of many talents and interests, known near and far. Lately he has specialized in landscape design and in 2008 he was responsible for landscaping the corporate headquarters of Vale Inco in Mississauga. He and Tyrone did a mural depicting core area lands and pow-wow grounds for New Credit First Nations. In 2009 he was asked to do design work to illustrate Long Point Causeway for a series of eco-passages to allow water and wildlife to move freely under the roadway.

"In 2005 we did graphics and designs for the 'Phan-

tom' yacht built by John VanHalteren for Dr. Peter Scheer of California," he stated, adding "I just heard from Dr. Scheer and the Phantom is in Panama." Peter and Tyrone painted a large octopus on each side of the hull and created a 16-foot long mosaic depicting a coral reef incorporating over 10,000 individual pieces of vitreous Italian glass for decoration in the yacht's master bath. Last year the Ramsey imagination drew a plan whereby Silver Lake would exist as well as a moving stream separated from the lake so both interest groups would be satisfied. He says he is disappointed that neither side took an interest in his duo use plan.

At the time of my visit on Thursday, Peter was painting a picture of an eagle in flight for the cover of a book to be published. While admiring framed pictures adorning the walls of his studio, Peter informed me, "last year I had a showing in Lighthouse Festival Theatre Gallery of 18 original oil paintings." Then he added, "I was quite amazed at how the theatre has grown and prospered, and became such an important source of culture and entertainment for our community."

I was reminded that Peter Ramsey was one of the first volunteers on the scene when the vacant Old Town Hall auditorium was in its earliest stages of renovation. I had interviewed him then, along with a group of other forward-thinking volunteers. Peter went to his files and produced a copy of The Maple Leaf dated May 9, 1980. The leading front page story in the newspaper began with, "The Town

Hall is ready for volunteers to help with the painting and cleaning," Mr. Peter Ramsey told The Maple Leaf. "There are a dozen assorted jobs that must be done this Saturday," the project manager added. He recalled for me on Thursday that 60 volunteers answered the call and The Vaudevillians opened on stage nine weeks later ... and the rest is history.

That massive undertaking was not Peter's first brush with community service. The Maple Leaf dated March 21, 1980 has a front page photo of Peter up in the Old Town Hall clock tower winding the big four-faced timepiece. To wind the clock once a week required two strong arms and about 20 minutes of volunteer time to lift the weights in the tower that power the movement. Peter succeeded the late Charles Ivey in that responsibility.

Peter Ramsey's father, George, was a painter and sign maker in Port Dover since the early 1930s. He had painted Summer Garden signs for Ben Ivey and later for his son Don C. Ivey. George Ramsey also painted signage for Carl Ryerse on his Arbor building -- including early versions of the favourite sun bather still used on the sign today. Peter reminded me on Thursday he re-opened the family business in 1977 and directed Summer Garden building updates the following year. In his younger years Peter traveled extensively in North America and the Caribbean as an itinerate painter.

Today Peter and Tyrone carry on a family tradition, which now includes doing mosaics, faux finishing and model work.

## Port Dover Maple Leaf

Published every Wednesday  
351 Main Street, Port Dover N0A 1N0  
mapleleaf@inportdover.com  
www.inportdover.com

A community newspaper devoted to the interests of Port Dover and area

Stan Morris Editor & Publisher  
Paul Morris General Manager  
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Annual Subscription Rate \$44 within Canada

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Canada

Canada Post Agreement  
0040050616