

# Opinion

## MUSKOKA MOSAIC

### Introducing someone new

BY PAULA BOON

I don't know the baby's name. I could have asked the woman who was rocking the stroller gently back and forth while she talked with a friend, but it wasn't that kind of an interview.

A few weeks ago I was walking down Main Street puzzling over who would be an appropriate Muskoka Mosaic subject for the Christmas Eve issue of the newspaper. Then, there she was: a beautiful baby bundled in pink blankets, her cheeks rosy from the cold.

The expression on her face was at once relaxed and concentrated as she took in every sight, smell and sound around her. There was no indication that the baby was judging things as good, bad or ugly. From the lights in store windows to the piece of litter that had fallen from a garbage can, she simply wanted to find out about it.

Then, the baby turned her gaze – unguarded, unself-conscious and unwavering – on me. I looked back at her, captivated. Others passing by were just as moved. Some waved, some smiled, and some reached out to touch her on their way past. It was quite something to see how the polite veneers of strangers melted away when faced with this little bundle of humanity. A woman with grey hair interrupted the stroller-side conversation to say, "Enjoy her. They grow up so fast."

I began to imagine what it would be like to interview this baby. What if she could tell me about her experience outside the womb? After several months of adjustment, her days are probably taken up with a more or less predictable routine of eating, sleeping, pooping and interacting with her new world. For now, her needs and wants are one and the same, and she is content as long as they are met.

Later, she may learn from television or her friends that she absolutely must have the latest toys and gadgets. She may begin to feel the need to hide her true face behind a mask to gain the acceptance of others. She may build walls around herself in reaction to some physical or emotional pain she has suffered. She may forget who she really is.

But for now, this baby is a lesson in just being. When she is hungry, she cries; when she's tired, she yawns, stretches and falls asleep.

And what if I asked her about her hopes or plans for the future? The baby doesn't have a concept of anything but the present, and she doesn't know what's in store for her, that in what seems like no time she will become a young girl and then a woman.



Maybe this baby will live simply when she grows up. Maybe she will change the world. Maybe she'll do both. But right now, all that matters is what is happening here and now.

The baby began to squirm. The woman picked her up, kissed her on the cheek, and held her close. Within seconds, the baby snuggled in, content again.

Watching her eyelids begin to droop, I wondered how the baby would answer if I asked her what she'd like to say to the people of Huntsville.

And, standing there on the snowy sidewalk, I realized: she doesn't have to say anything.

Her mere presence is a message. Every person walking our town's streets, and every other human being on earth, began just as tiny, just as vulnerable, and just as innocent as this baby. She is a reminder to hold ourselves and each other gently and recognize that we are all in this together.

And, although it's easy to forget as we go about our busy-ness, she is also a reminder that the world is a wondrous place, and our true needs are few: food to eat, a place to sleep and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Merry Christmas.

## LETTERS

### National Grocers closure will leave customers scrambling

After many rumors we have finally been informed officially (by a notice posted in the store) that National Grocers, the only cash and carry for grocers and restaurants in Huntsville area, is closing in January.

Both National Grocers and Loblaw's, who apparently own them, refused to comment when we approached them for the reasons behind the closure. Judging by the amount of people who go there, I cannot believe they are running at a loss.

Apart from the obvious loss of jobs for the people who are employed at National Grocers, which is bad enough, the knock-off effect to the small stores and restaurants in and around Huntsville will be catastrophic.

The shutting of this facility will force the closure of some small businesses that are already struggling in these turbulent times and make food, etc. more expensive in the

small local stores for the very people who cannot travel into town to shop.

Many restaurants and resorts buy their supplies at National Grocers, as well as most of the summer camps in Algonquin Park and the surrounding area. Some will now have to shop retail, which will force prices up yet again (don't forget that both hydro and local taxes have gone up).

I and other retailers are looking at sourcing our supplies elsewhere at very short notice.

As of yet we have still to find other suppliers.

In an area already suffering because of the economic downturn, we do not need a large firm like Loblaw's to put the boot in as well.

Colin Smith

Parkway Resort Trading Post, Oxtongue Lake

### Member of Parliament Tony Clement is 'minister of photo ops'

Tony Clement's on the hot seat. It seems those who voted for Harper's former minister of health (and now a new portfolio) are less enamoured with the cottager.

Tony Clement has always been Harris's boy and now Harper's boy. Clement stands for nothing but obedience to the boss and

smiles for the camera. I think of Tony Clement as the minister of photo ops – impotence with a smile.

To all the suckers who voted for Clement, watch your health care disappear.

Mendelson Joe Emsdale

### Ontario Energy Board, power companies all in on 'big con'

Did anyone actually read the insert they received with their latest hydro bill?

You know, the one from the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) announcing the 12 per cent increase (5.0 x 12 per cent = 0.6) in the cost of electricity beginning Nov. 1. After I got up off the floor, I continued reading the smaller print giving the reasons for the increase.

One of the reasons for the increase is, "The expected cost of Ontario Power Authority conservation initiatives." I guess that means those free discount coupons the OEB has been handing out to get us all to buy the new CFL bulbs and programmable thermostats aren't free after all. And the program to pick up the old refrigerators is probably included as well. They are going to recoup the cost of those discounts and probably more with the increased cost of electricity.

You keep seeing advertisements stating how much money you will save by using

the new CFL bulbs and energy-efficient appliances. However, you don't save anything if the rates keep going up because usage is down and the power generation companies are not making as much money as before.

Many, many years ago the old Ontario Hydro announced increases to their rates citing that due to the lower consumption by its customers (after a big power conservation push), their revenue was down, and therefore they had to increase the rates to get their revenue back up.

Cutting the amount of power you use is good thing, but don't insult my intelligence by telling me it's going to cost me less. Seems to me that the less power you use the more you are going to pay. It's all a big con job by the power generation companies and the Ontario Energy Board.

Doug Philip Dwight

### Volunteer firefighters are Huntsville's 'unsung heroes'

I would like to tip my hat to the men and women of the Huntsville fire department.

On Saturday, Dec. 20, I had to make a call for help to the fire department.

Upon their arrival they carried themselves in a very efficient and professional manner.

I was overwhelmed at their respect for my property and possessions and they showed the upmost care and concern for myself and my dog, Tater.

They stayed on the scene until they were confident everything was safe and secure.

Their calm and reassuring manner made a very stressful situation a little more bearable.

I cannot thank them enough for such an outstanding job.

We tend to take our volunteer firefighters for granted, but let me tell you, they deserve all the praise and glory we can muster.

Again, ladies and gentlemen, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to thank Rob. You are a hero, and went above and beyond the call of duty.

We are very fortunate to have these unsung heroes looking out for us.

Tina Turley Huntsville

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

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