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## UW should reveal its pool plans now

From the waters of Wilfrid Laurier University's 50-metre pool have come Olympic gold, silver, bronze — and some of the finest swimmers to ever represent Canada. But along with the pride that is felt next month when two athletes who trained in this pool compete at the Beijing Olympics, there will be deep sadness.

Just days after the nation cheers on Waterloo residents Keith Beavers and Jessica Tuomela, the pool that helped them get to the Games, and the only facility of its kind in Waterloo Region, will close. The only thing that can save it is \$1.5 million to pay for badly needed repairs. And that's \$1.5 million Laurier doesn't have.

Considering the storied history of this pool, the enormous stature of the swimmers who have trained here, and the value of the local swimming community to Canadian sports, it should be possible, even now, to save the facility. But it's not that easy.

The situation is complicated by the possibility that a new multi-million-dollar state-of-the-art aquatic complex could open a stone's throw away at the University of Waterloo. A lot of rumours are swirling around out there. But the University of Waterloo's incoming athletics director, Bob Copeland won't say what's going on.

His response is inadequate, even though Copeland may not be free to say more. With its two universities, one of Canada's best colleges, and the first-rate Region of Waterloo swim club, this area has an obvious need for an Olympic-class pool. It probably doesn't need two.

The powers at Laurier could decide to cover the cost of \$1.5 million in repairs through fundraising. Conversely, they might decide that the best long-term solution is to somehow find \$20 million to replace the 35-year-old pool. But they can't make a proper decision on what to do with their pool until they fully understand what might be built across University Avenue at UW.

Fairness as well as the needs of the community demand that all the cards — or more accurately the preliminary blueprints — appear on the table. What is going on at the University of Waterloo? Is it looking to build anything? If so, what and when? And could the Region of Waterloo swim club eventually find a home there?

This region, with its own club and the Laurier pool, has already placed so many names on the who's-who list of Canadian swimmers. Laura Nicholls, Jen Button, Mike West and, of course, the legendary Victor Davis, who won a gold and two silver medals at the 1984 Games. It can, in all likelihood, do more. But it needs the right pool. And the right plan that the public can endorse. Let's have both.

## Perimeter Institute is a great magnet

A few years ago, the thought that the world's most famous physicist might leave one of the planet's greatest universities to come to Waterloo Region would have seemed a bit far-fetched.

Now, even if it doesn't quite happen, the possibility doesn't seem outlandish at all. In fact, it seems very sensible.

A major reason for this change in the region's intellectual strength is the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo. Established by Mike Lazaridis, co-founder of Research In Motion, the institute has gained a worldwide reputation among physicists. It is not only leading on the scientific front but it is leading on the broader education field as well. The institute takes its goal of spreading knowledge among lay people very seriously.

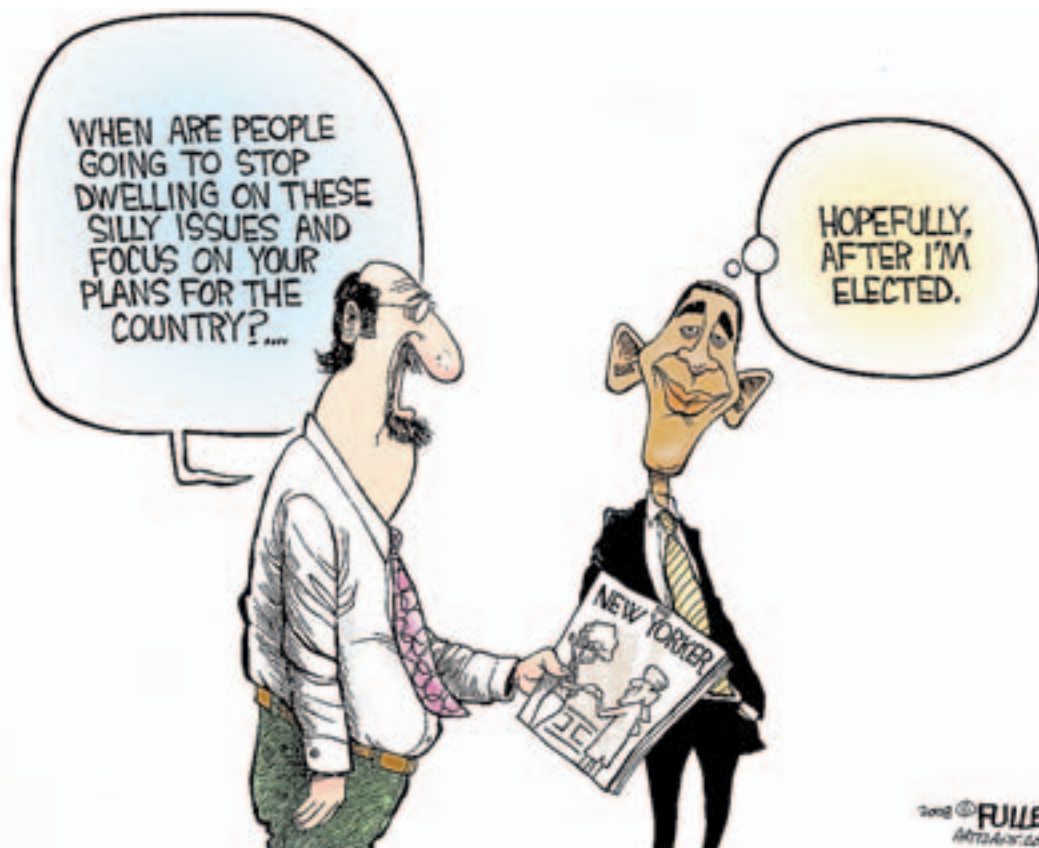
No doubt these assets are behind British physicist Stephen Hawking's decision to visit the institute next year. Hawking, who is currently at Cambridge University, plans to come after his colleague Neil Turok becomes executive director of the institute this fall.

Rumours started floating earlier this week that Hawking might be interested in moving permanently to the Perimeter Institute. Indeed, the institute confirmed that it has made a standing offer to Hawking. "The door is certainly wide open," said John Matlock, the Perimeter's director of external relations. "It would be absolutely wonderful to have him. . . . But the decision is totally up to Prof. Hawking."

The rumour gained some credence because Hawking recently criticized the British government for cutting funds to research projects. Alas, a statement issued by Cambridge University says Hawking has no plans to permanently leave Cambridge.

Fair enough. Hawking certainly has the right to choose where he wants to live and work. Nevertheless, there should be no doubt in Hawking's mind or the mind of anyone else that the Perimeter Institute, the two universities in Waterloo Region, and the region's residents would be more than delighted if he decides to come here.

Waterloo Region is not just a part of Ontario. It is a part of the future. The Perimeter Institute, the universities and our leading companies are showing everyone the future each day.



## Letters

### Let's move toward single-tier government

Re: **Bigger Councils May Not Be Better** — July 5

The Record editorial recommends a debate on how to improve local democracy. We presently elect 51 people to fill 58 seats in the whole of the region, and we are in danger of adding to this. One elected representative for less than 10,000 people is more than we need or can afford.

As a Kitchener city councillor in the early 1960s, I recall that the City of Kitchener faced a severe shortage of industrial land. The only solution was to look at the annexation of Waterloo Township land but, unfortunately, the obvious lands for annexation were the most productive revenue generators for the township.

At a meeting with Ted Isley, the then-reeve of the township, and Gordon Cooper, the clerk, it was proposed that Kitchener amalgamate with the township to avoid a situation whereby the township was stripped of so much of its assessment that it could no longer service the community. The township council opted to refer the whole matter to the province for its direction and, as a result, the Fyfe Commission on local municipal reform was formed. The Fyfe report was in the hands of the printers with the recommendation that major amalgamations for both north and south of Highway 401 when, unfortunately, it encountered some political interference. The final recom-

mendation of the Fyfe report led to our two-tier system as we now know it.

The early days of regional council, formed in November 1972, were filled with apprehension and suspicion, but if the surviving members of that original regional council were polled, the vast majority would agree that regional government has worked!

The concern has to be with the lower tier, because it holds many powers that should be turned over to the region. Fire, libraries, water and hydro distribution should be regional. Duplication in planning and economic development is needless. There is not much left for the lower tier to do.

Over the past 18 months I have visited with senior officials in Hamilton and Ottawa to review their transition to a one-tier system of government. They are having some problems, but the light at the end of the tunnel is much brighter than what we see through the haze of Waterloo Region.

Discussion on change in size of councils and/or ward boundaries should be put on hold. We should concentrate on an open review of our existing two-tier system. A single, one-tier government of 24 people and a chair is what should be debated.

*Harold Chapman, member  
Citizens For Better Government  
Kitchener*

### Thanks to salamander

Re: **River Road extension**

The Jefferson salamander will be a hero if the River Road expansion is halted to protect its habitat.

The cost of extending River Road through the sensitive lands in picturesque Hidden Valley is estimated to be \$57 million — clearly, a lot of money. That's alongside the \$700 million to be spent on the expansion of all our region's municipal and provincial roads.

Then there's the one-third share of the \$300 million the region will pay for the first phase of the rapid transit corridor.

If the Jefferson salamander saves \$57 million from the road budget to help fund the region's public transit plan, we will owe it a debt of gratitude.

*George Bechtel  
Kitchener*

### Cyclists lack courtesy

Re: **Put Bikes On Sidewalks** — July 10

Allowing bicycle riders on the sidewalks is a good idea but only if the cyclists can become cour-

teous.

I ride a bicycle, and I also walk, but when I ride the bike I tend to use the great community trails the City of Kitchener has provided for us.

I was out walking recently and about four bikes passed me — and scared the daylight out of me. Not one of them let me know they were coming.

I have a bell on my bike, and if other cyclists start using the sidewalks it should be mandatory that they have a bell or horn.

That should be the case for those using the community trails as well.

Please, when riding the sidewalks be more courteous to the person walking and let them know you are coming.

*Marilyn Gibson  
Kitchener*

### Carbon tax will hurt

Re: **Liberals' carbon tax proposal**

While they were in power for 14 years, the Liberals did absolutely nothing about global warming — even when energy issues were as hot a subject as they are now.

The Liberals were in power during the 1970s, the last time the crunch was on over gas prices, and they did nothing. Now here we are in 2008 and it's the same old story. When families and seniors are struggling with trying to keep roofs over their heads and feeding themselves, the Liberals are proposing another tax.

People in the Maritimes are selling their homes because they cannot afford to heat with oil in winter. The tax won't be revenue neutral; the money coming back in income tax won't even cover what people are going to shell out in a year in carbon tax.

Remember the GST? The Liberal party was going to scrap it when elected.

What happened with that?

This carbon tax will hit people who depend on electricity, natural gas or heating oil, as well as food prices. I am not against trying to do my part for conservation and the climate but go after the polluters who refuse to clean up, not the working people who may still have a job.

*Rick Bilicky  
Cambridge*

## Food shortages have been wrongly linked to biofuels

Any reference manual on vocabulary and linguistic terms will mention "word association." Most of us associate one item to another — coffee and a doughnut, or cereal and milk. Now a new word pair has emerged — biofuels and high food prices.

But is this truly the case? Many articles have suggested that one goes with the other: Columnist Carol Goar posited in Saturday's Record that Canadians don't know who to believe or where to find straight answers.

Food prices are in fact influenced by biofuel production, but the influence is minor, and a poor reason for policy decisions. Were there no ethanol, the price of food



Jeff Stager  
Second  
Opinion

would not go down. The reality is that at the grocery store 95 per cent plus of the cost of food is in the supply chain, from transportation to storage to advertising to retailing.

A benchmark document came from the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization after its meeting in Rome early last month. The organization's mandate, since inception of the UN, has been to deal with the politics of food and

the scourge of starvation. Its members have added biofuels, global warming, and oil prices to its traditional areas of interest in world trade agreements, urbanization, salinization of farm land, agricultural research, rural development and education, and emergency response and donor funding.

They didn't actually assign a weighting to all these factors but, clearly, biofuels are not the cause of high food prices. But they are part of the issue. Canadian policy that attempted to correct high food prices by changing biofuel regulations looks good as a political issue, but it would not work.

For every 100 pounds of grain

used to make ethanol, the producer ends up with 75 pounds of by-product known as distillers grains — a product that is a usable animal feed ingredient and a source of protein.

The general public may not be aware that most of the grain used for biofuels is not a "lost" resource; just one transformed to another usable form.

An acre of corn captures eight tons of carbon dioxide in a growing season. Even if it was true that ethanol uses as much energy to produce it as it releases, the process is basically recycling the CO2 in the atmosphere rather than introducing new CO2 from hydrocarbons.

Futurists suggest that the more exotic sources of energy are 10 to 20 years away. Biofuel production is an excellent substitute until then.

If politicians under pressure from concerned voters want to do something about high food prices in the short term, they should look at oil prices first, the diversion of good food to pet food (there goes the human pleasure of companion animals), and the feeding of race horses (and all those gambling revenues).

I can see where this is going. The biofuels initiative is done.

Jeff Stager is the immediate past president of the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture.

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