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new home, hope
CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY HELPS
YOUTH BECOME HIGH SCHOOL GRAD

PAGE B1

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JOB PROMISES ALL TALK: PROFESSOR



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

David Theriault of Peninsula Construction works on contract with York Region in the construction industry. He describes this year as being "fantastic, really busy."

ONTARIO '11 VOTES

BY SEAN PEARCE
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Throughout the election campaign, all four major parties have spoken at length about how they have the right tools to re-build Ontario's sputtering economy and turn what has become a "have-not" province back into a 500-horsepower, ram-air injected, job-creating powerhouse.

Unfortunately, for all of that talk, a government can take about as much credit for creating new employment as a rooster can for making the sun rise, according to York University political science professor Thomas Klassen.

'The government likes to have people employed but it's not really interested in what sort of employment they have.'

Thomas Klassen
York University political science professor

Mr. Klassen recently co-authored a report for the Mowat Centre entitled *Improving the Governance of Employment and Training Policy in Canada* and has written extensively on the Canadian labour market. He was also a senior policy adviser in the Ontario government for a decade.

In general, governments don't do a good job of creating new private sector employment he said, but, what they can do is help people acquire new skills and additional education

See POLITICIANS, page A7.

In this week's... It's **you**



Look inside for this pullout community section

THE TOP 5: Family outings

- Career fundraiser earns award
- Curler sweeps up with Russian rink
- Your chance to win Leafs tickets

We want to hear from you:
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Service review seeks savings

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
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Newmarket council has requested more information before going forward with the second phase of the town's service review.

While the first phase of the review, which focuses on reviewing the current service pricing policy, revenue sources and requested enhancements, began last month, phase two, which focuses on efficiency and effectiveness, has yet to be given the green light, according

to Newmarket CAO Bob Shelton.

The second phase of the review will be on core services offered by the town. The focus will be to label the mandated services the town must provide as well as the non-essential services, Mr. Shelton explained.

The non-essential services will be reviewed for validity, service level adjustments and customer service needs.

"We are not looking at service level cuts, but rather how things are done," he said.

See REVIEW, page A15.

Opinion divided on political attack ad effectiveness

BY KIM ZARZOUR & CHRIS TRABER
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"When you sling mud, you lose ground," Illinois governor and unsuccessful presidential candidate Adlai E. Stevenson Jr. (1900-1965) was fond of saying.

If that were true, the practice of publicly slamming your political opponent would have been retired long ago.

But witness the ads waged in the current provincial election campaign. While the three major parties swamp print and electronic media with boastful, self-promoting claims, the flip sides are more noxious.

The Conservatives label Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty as the unrelenting Tax Man, hammering away to create the perception of a legacy of broken promises. The Liberals coun-

ter with Hansard statistics, citing the number of anti-job creation legislative votes that were cast by Conservative Leader Tim Hudak and New Democratic Leader Andrea Horwath.

The NDP has opted to take a gentler tact. In fact, in August, Ms Horwath called to ban all political advertisements before elections, including those by third party special interest groups.

Concern over the growing presence of negative advertising spurred a Facebook group during the federal election to rally efforts to ban them, but Canadians Against Attack Ads has seen little action since the spring.

Like them or loathe them, attack ads work, Seneca College media and marketing professor James Cullingham said.

"Political parties wouldn't use and refine



them if they didn't," he said. "The challenge is to find the right formula. It can be risky. When it works, it can be extremely effective."

Mr. Cullingham offers the federal Conservatives' slamming of then-Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff during this spring's federal election as a prime example of persuasive attack advertising. The tagline was Ignatieff: Just visiting.

"The Conservatives used satire and made their point with humour," he said. "It seemed

to be quite effective."

But attack ads can backfire, Mr. Cullingham said, citing the infamous 1995 ad by Conservative Kim Campbell mocking Liberal Jean Chrétien's facial Bells palsy. Political figures decided the ad as political desperation.

"The results were disastrous," he said. "It offended many."

There's speculation that the enigmatic ads run this month by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario may have backfired, too.

The \$2-million radio, TV and print ads "vote against kids", suggesting, in a possibly too subtle way, that a vote for Hudak is a vote against kids, confused many who saw them,

See RESIDENTS, page A8.

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In Depth



Call gave 5 siblings new home, hope

BY CHRIS TRABER
ctraber@yrmg.com

It was more than half his lifetime ago, but 18-year-old Skyler Bridges remembers the day vividly.

Then a Grade 3 Lake Wilcox Public School student, he recalls being met by a York Region Children's Aid Society worker and driven away.

"I didn't have any idea about what was going on," the newly minted high school graduate said. "The child service worker did their best to explain things. They told me that I'd have to be away from my mom for a while until the house was made safe."

His thoughts were on his four brothers and adopted sister. Their ages ranged from three to 15. He and two brothers were introduced to his foster family in Aurora that night.

He recalls, too, about his life before the society intervened.

"When we lived with mom, things weren't very positive," he said diplomatically. "We lived day-to-day. We had little food and few clothes. Mom had trouble paying bills. That was a big issue."

At the tender age of eight, he knew much of his existence wasn't the way it should be. A teacher at his Richmond Hill school sensed the same. The society was contacted and an investigation merited the decision to intervene.

'We lived day-to-day. We had little food and few clothes. Mom had trouble paying bills. That was a big issue.'

Skyler Bridges
Children's Aid Society foster child



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

York Region Children's Aid Society families services director Ivan Peters (left) calls Skyler Bridges a success story. After graduating high school, Mr. Bridges plans to attend college.

came the opportunity to simply be a kid. "I started learning about life," he said. "I learned things don't come easy. I understood why things happen and that it was for the best."

Hope and confidence was possibly the most valuable byproduct.

Mr. Bridges and his brothers lived with their foster family several years until their foster mom died. They were invited to join another family in Markham, which subsequently moved to Oshawa, where he and a 14-year-old brother still reside. He's attending night school for Grade 12 math and wants to go to college to study engineering or plumbing.

The Children's Aid Foundation of York Region provides crown wards with laptop computers and post-secondary scholarships up to \$2,500.

Vaughan Roberts has been Mr. Bridges' longtime child service worker. The duo are close. "Like brothers," Mr. Bridges said. Mr. Roberts, who is responsible for up to 20 young clients, sees his change monthly, reviews goals, connects with foster parents and teachers and monitors progress. He smiles when appraising Mr. Bridges.

"I'm quite proud of Skyler," he said. "He's worked hard. He's intelligent and kind hearted. He's one of the reasons you

ON THE WEB

► To learn the signs of abuse or to contact the society, visit useyourvoice.ca/en/protect

enjoy this job."

The admiration is mutual. "Vaughan has had a big impact on my life," Mr. Bridges said. "I look up to him."

The agency keeps in touch with Mr. Bridges' birth mother.

"She's thankful for the intervention," Mr. Roberts said. "She's happy how Skyler has developed in to a fine young man."

Mr. Bridges' situation is typical in the sense that he was a young child who desperately needed help, Mr. Peters said.

"However, his story is unique, as are all the children's," he said. "Each person's care and the approach to service is tailored to the individual."

It all began with one concerned caller many years ago, Mr. Peters said, noting October is child abuse prevention month and the society encourages you to be vigilant and learn the signs of abuse and neglect. These include a child who attends school without proper

FAST FACTS

Children's Aid is legislated under the Child and Family Services Act to:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and neglect;
- Protect children where necessary, provide guidance, counseling and other services to families for protecting children and for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
- Provide care or supervision for children assigned to its care; and
- Place children for adoption.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Last year, the York Region society provided child protection services to more than 5,200 children and youth;
- In 2010/2011, 193 children under the age of two were served by the society's high risk infant nurses;
- Each year, Children's Aid in Ontario responds to more than 155,000 calls about the possible abuse and neglect of children and youth and;
- There are 53 Children's Aid Societies providing services to diverse communities across Ontario, including Francophone and First Nations.

clothing, an outgoing child who becomes withdrawn or there's increasingly excessive behavior. Observe suspicious physical markers such as welts, burns and bruises. Calls to the society are anonymous and can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"The signs of abuses are important," he said. "We sense that many people wait until they're convinced that there's a serious situation. All you need is a concern. Call and talk to our professionals."

Most referrals, 41 per cent, are received from York Regional Police, while schools account for 18 per cent of alerts. Calls increase annually. There are about 500 children and youth in the care of the York Region society on an ongoing basis.

The system works.

His younger brother is in Grade 9 and coping well, Mr. Bridges said. His sister is working in Calgary and another brother is a musician.

"I'm very thankful and appreciate all the society and our foster families have done," he said. "I've been given opportunities I wouldn't have had."

Communications director Jennifer Grant commends Mr. Bridges for his bravery.

"We're incredibly proud of Skyler and his courage for telling his story and the impact he might have for children who don't have a voice," she said.

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