

Editorial ? Let the constituents decide issues about their reps

It stands to reason that a person seeking elected office will employ any means necessary to get on the good side of the voters. There's nothing wrong or cynical about that. Indeed, we would argue it represents good common sense.

And by the same token, there are facts some politicians might try to play down certain things because they could cast a somewhat negative light on them. And there would be a good argument for that person's political opponents to try and make some proverbial hay from those points. Again, it would make sense for them to do that. To repeat the point, there is nothing wrong with a politician showing common sense. And who among us would want to vote for someone who's stupid?

But we believe that all the facts should rightly be placed before the voters, and then those voters should have the right to adjudicate them.

The issue of whether elected officials should actually reside within their constituencies has been a topic of some discussion lately. It was prompted largely by the recent controversy surrounding Thornhill MPP Peter Shurman, who was bounced from his job as Progressive Conservative Finance Critic at Queen's Park. He got the ax over the fact he accepted a housing allowance because he chooses to live some distance from Queen's Park and his riding. For what it's worth, we believe he was in compliance with the rules that are in place, meaning it was wrong and politically dumb to can him. With an election possibly imminent, does party leader Tim Hudak really need to breed dissension in the ranks?

But the real issue is where an elected representative hangs his or her hat is not a matter for the higher-ups. It's the concern of the constituents, and we maintain it should be left up to them.

For sure, whether or not a candidate lives in the area they seek to represent is a legitimate issue in the campaign. And if a resident of elsewhere seeks to represent an area, then that could very well be a negative point in the campaign which the opponents would be at liberty to pounce on. But if the voters decide to accept that person as their rep, warts and all, then it's their call, and where the person lives is strictly a matter between him or herself and the constituents.

There are local precedents. John Tory was MPP for Dufferin?Peel?Wellington?Grey (which included Caledon) for about two and a half years, although he didn't live here. We've heard very few complaints about the quality of service his constituents received during that time.

We live in a time when some in power seek to restrict who can stand for certain offices, based on where they live, where they serve and what they've done. The calls we sometimes hear to limit the number of terms people can serve in elected office is another example of that.

Can't we leave these decisions to the electorate? This is supposed to be a democracy, meaning it's supposed to be their call.