

EDITORIAL:

Calling all candidates

Tomorrow marks the end of the first real month of summer. We've turned the corner and we're on the downward slope back to the hubbub created by back to school, back to work and the start of new sports seasons.

In the summer villages around the lake this year's municipal elections have taken place. But in urban and rural municipalities the elections are still a little more than two months away.

Plenty of time, some might think, for current councillors and potential councillors to ponder whether to seek a three year term on council when elections are held in October.

Two new candidates have declared their interest already — Dale Plante and Graham Parsons. We've heard rumours of others planning or pondering their involvement. And we've had strong hints from some current members that they'll be seeking another term.

Over the next few weeks we expect a flurry of announcements. We expect those because in a community the size of Sylvan Lake it's going to take time to meet the residents, learn the issues and campaign.

With at least two vacancies — Richard Backs has announced he isn't running again and Frank Peck's health will keep him out of the race — there will definitely be a new composition to the next council.

As council takes a break over the next few weeks — they cancelled their August 9 meeting and the August 2 meeting of Municipal Planning Commission was cancelled, a practice carried on from previous years — there won't be a chance to watch them in action or get a feel for what councillors do when sitting around the table in chambers.

That means, we think, those who are considering involvement in municipal politics should already have been following issues and formulating their responses in preparation for campaigns.

Yet, you would think, potential candidates would have been interested enough to attend council meetings to see first hand what's going on and how debate takes place around the table.

If that were a prerequisite, then our community is going to be woefully short of candidates in this election. Unless there's a specific issue, the gallery of council chambers remains virtually empty meeting after meeting.

With just four council meetings before the end of the current term we can only hope that the gallery fills and interest is shown in serving our community through elected office.

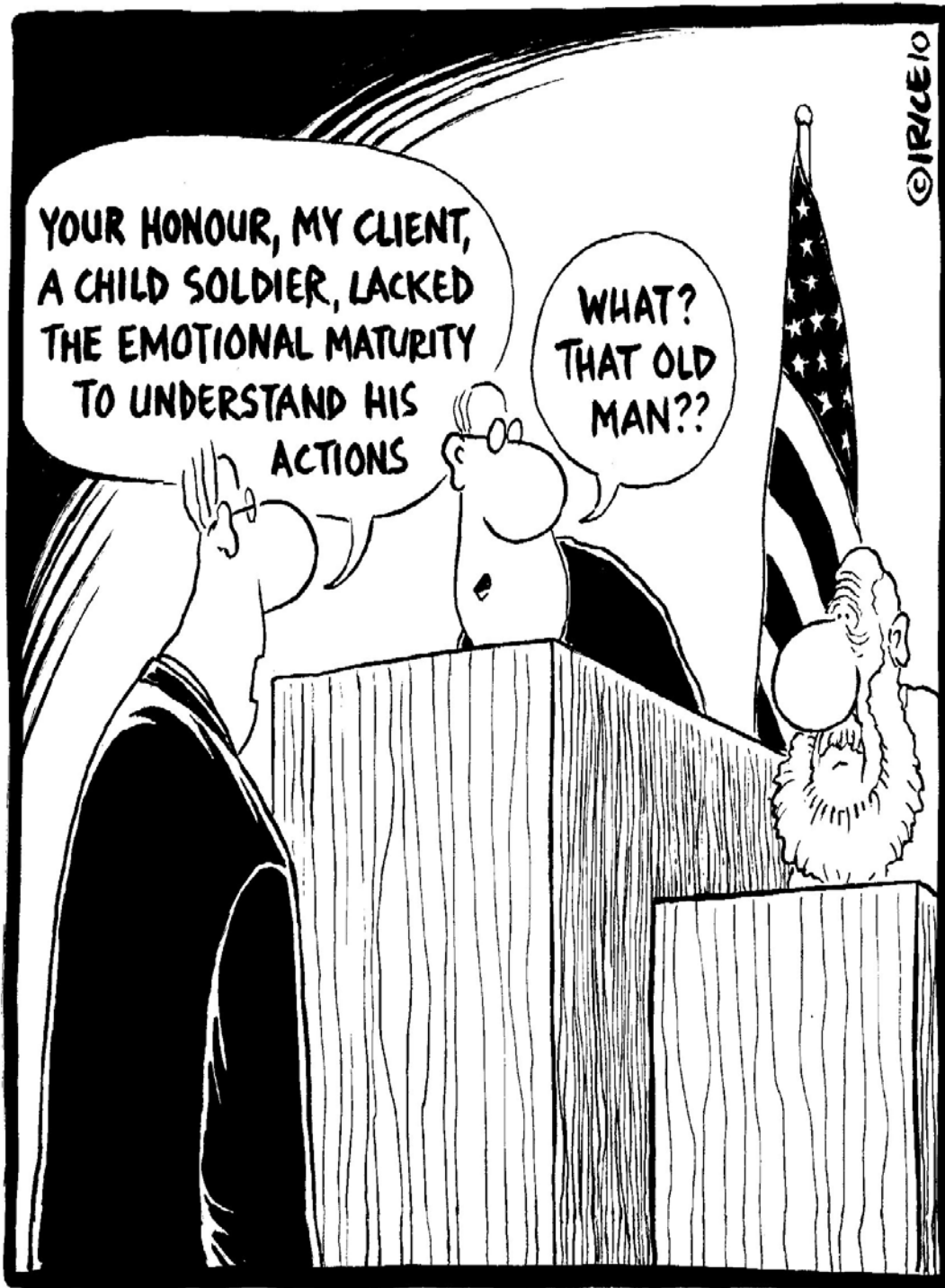
Now is the time for those sitting on the sidelines to make their intentions known. To say, "I'm in" and begin the campaign, raising their profile and bringing issues to the forefront.

It's not as if there aren't issues in this community, as can be seen weekly in this newspaper and the Letters to the Editor columns.

We need leaders to stand up now and become active in our community's future, leaders who will show now that they're prepared for the work involved.



Steve Dills
Editor
Sylvan Lake News



OMAR KHADR'S TRIAL FINALLY GETS UNDERWAY

COLUMN:

Contract dispute will be watched closely

Even though this year's NHL free agent class is not one of the deepest there has still been plenty of controversy and drama surrounding the biggest signing so far.

Before the ink was even dry on Ilya Kovalchuk's deal with the New Jersey Devils the league put the brakes on it saying it circumvented the league's salary cap rules. Kovalchuk signed a monster 17-year, \$102 million dollar contract with the Devils last week that ended a month long watch on this year's top free agent. The league refused the contract feeling its structure tried to bend the salary cap rules.

The Devils wanted to front load the contract so Kovalchuk would make \$95 million over his first ten years then only \$7 million over the last seven seasons of the deal. It was structured this way so the

Devils would only feel the cap hit of \$6 million per season. The contract runs until Kovalchuk turns 44 years old and many predict he will be long gone from his playing days and won't finish his contractual obligations. It also allows Kovalchuk to retire anytime during the last seven years and New Jersey would lose the \$6 million cap hit.

What I don't understand about the league not accepting the deal is they recently approved similar contracts for players such as Chris Pronger, Roberto Luongo and Marian Hossa so what makes this different. The situation is creating an uproar because it essentially lets teams sign players for more than the cap allowance and they don't have to pay that much

against the salary cap. It also allows teams to lose that cap hit even though the contract might still have many years left on it.

Kovalchuk is the best goal scorer in the league since 2001 and does deserve top

dollar from a team but what I don't like is that the Devils will be paying \$10 million per season for the first ten years but only paying \$6 million against the cap. If you

want to sign a player for \$10 million per season then you should be on the hook for that much money and build your team according to that model. But in the same respect if you have already allowed the same deals for other players there should be no reason to deny this one between Kovalchuk and the Devils.

What this contract also does is throw a major kink into a new collective bargaining agreement between the NHL and players union which is set to expire next summer. By denying the Kovalchuk contract the league is sending their first message that the salary cap rules will need to be changed for a new bargaining agreement to work. Time will only tell on what kinds of impacts these contracts have on negotiations but it will also be followed very closely by other leagues that use a salary cap.

As for Kovalchuk and the Devils, they will go before an arbitrator who will rule on the case in the next couple months. If the contract is denied then Kovalchuk will go back into the free agent pool again. If the deal is good we will see the longest and richest contract in NHL history.



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