

Editorial

Show us the money

Those who don't normally follow the day-to-day business of the Halton District School Board may wonder why a story about \$54,000 in legal bills received front page coverage in *The Independent & Free Press* last week.

Compared to the board's 2005-06 operating budget of \$325 million, \$54,000 seems insignificant. It represents about 11 per cent of the board's \$500,000 annual legal budget.

However, this is far from being an ordinary expense.

These legal costs were authorized without ever having been discussed or approved by the 11 trustees elected by Halton's public school supporters.

Hiring an outside law firm when the board already had a lawyer—well versed in education law—on retainer was a waste of tax dollars.

The services of the outside law firm were enlisted by two trustees—Chair Paul Tate and Vice-chair Peggy Russell. In May, Tate said the legal advice would cost taxpayers about \$10,000. To date, the firm has invoiced the public school board for \$54,299.16.

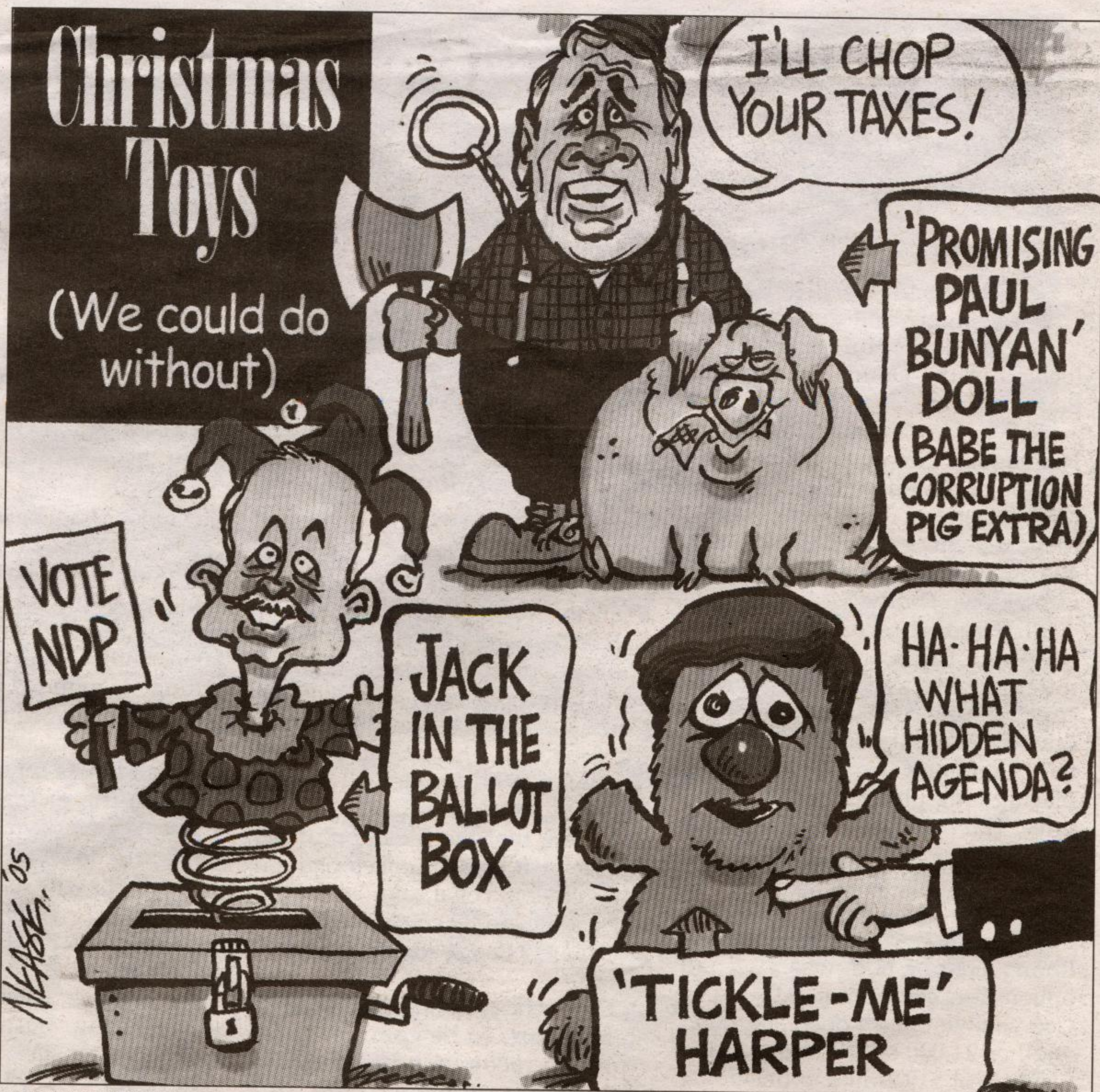
Had it not been for a leaked document, taxpayers may not have ever learned how much this independent legal advice cost. We also may not have learned that the services of this outside law firm extended beyond last May's policy governance meetings and the surprise departure of former education director Dusty Papke to include legal work pertaining to the contract for Papke's successor, Wayne Joudrie.

Halton residents deserve to know how, and where, every penny of their tax dollars are being spent.

Earlier this year, more than \$600,000 was paid out to Papke as part of a negotiated severance package.

To date the cash-strapped board has not revealed where in the system's budget that money came from.

At a time when transparency is the popular political catch-phrase, the Halton District School Board has the appearance of being anything but transparent.



Letters to the editor...

Teen upset at letter writer's stereotyping

Dear editor,

I am responding to the Nov. 4 letter written by Katie Connolly, Older trick-or-treaters lack manners.

I am a teenaged resident of Georgetown, and yes, this Halloween, myself and a group of friends went trick-or-treating. I do not believe this is simply a holiday for "younger children," but should be enjoyed by all who wish to do so.

Never once did we run over small children at the doorway and we were always very polite to those answering the door. The point of the evening was not to "get five bagfuls of candy" due to "greed," but to have fun. In fact, our costumes were so creative (we went as The Beatles) that we

got stopped by many adults with younger children asking if they could take our picture, and, by request, we sang at many homes. We even stopped by the Seniors' Centre to entertain a group of wonderful residents in song.

So, the next time you decide to stereotype a person simply because of age, remember this, one day your little girl will become an "older kid". What happens then? Does she suddenly become rude, obnoxious and greedy?

Alyssa Newell, Georgetown

Can we afford 'amalgamation'?

Dear editor,

Re: Region amalgamation of services.

I am happy that we are about to see a savings of \$20-million through consolidation and amalgamation.

Looking back at a similar pre-

diction in connection with Metro Toronto, we can only hope and pray that since that financial disaster came about, we don't end up with a similar and very expensive "make work" project.

Marinus (Rein) Pater, Halton Hills

Driver's reaction to accident puzzling

Dear editor,

Re. C. Hunter's letter of Oct. 28 (Reader questions why he pays for the carelessness of other drivers).

Recently I was in the car park at a local business, when I heard a bump. When I checked, I saw that a green minivan had backed into the front of a blue Chevrolet. The driver of the van must have known what he had done, because he was hanging out of the van looking at it. Then he just drove away leaving about \$1,000 worth of damage.

I was able to get his (licence) number, so I went into the building, and found the owner of the blue Chev. I gave the owner the number and explained to her what had happened, but she didn't appear to be all that concerned. Maybe she knew the driver of the van, I don't know, but I left her my name and phone number expecting to hear from her. So far I haven't, so I don't what the outcome was.

As C. Hunter asked, why do people have to put up with the careless actions of other inconsiderate drivers?

Terry Brown, Georgetown

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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The Independent & Free Press is published every Wednesday and Friday at 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown Ont., L7G 4B1. It is one of the newspapers published by Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd., which includes: Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Alliston Herald/Courier, Bancroft This Week, Barrie Advance, Bolton Enterprise, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Shopping News, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, East York Mirror, Erin Advocate/Country Routes,

Etobicoke Guardian, Flamborough Post, Georgetown Independent/Acton Free Press, Huronia Business Times, Lindsay This Week, Markham Economist & Sun, Midland/Penetanguishene Mirror, Milton Canadian Champion, Milton Shopping News, Mississauga News, Mississauga Business Times, Napanee Guide, Newmarket/Aurora Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Oakville Shopping News, Oldtimers Hockey News, Orangeville Banner, Orillia Today, Oshawa-Whitby/Clarington

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Price: Store copies 50c each; Subscriptions \$26.00 per year by carrier; \$92.50 per year by mail in Canada; \$130.00 per

year in all other countries. Plus G.S.T. Second Class Mail Registration Number 6869. The Independent & Free Press is a member of The Canadian Community Newspaper Association and The Ontario Community Newspaper Association.

