

# OPINION

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Phone: 905-873-0301  
Fax: 905-873-0398

## Christmas comes early

There are some things in life that are just plain wrong, no matter how anyone tries to justify them:

- Paris Hilton's attempt at being a legitimate actress/singer.
- Sylvester Stallone trying to fleece the movie-going public with one more attempt at a *Rocky* film.
- Ontario MPPs giving themselves a 25 per cent wage hike two weeks before Christmas.

Not only was it bad enough that Dalton McGuinty's government introduced surprise legislation Tuesday that would see MPPs' salaries soar from \$88,771 to \$110,775 a year, but McGuinty did so after earlier saying he was not looking at pay increases for MPPs.

Another broken McGuinty pledge.

To top it off McGuinty told Conservative Leader John Tory (a longtime proponent of higher pay for MPPs) of his change of heart on Monday but then sandbagged NDP Leader Howard Hampton (who opposes the hikes) with news of the legislation only minutes before the bill was introduced.

This bill marks the first significant pay hike— apart from modest cost-of-living raises which are the only kinds of hikes many Ontario workers receive— for MPPs since former Conservative Premier Mike Harris increased MPPs' basic pay from \$42,218 to \$78,007 in 1996. That said, MPPs' salaries jumped nearly \$5,000 in 2002 and have climbed since then, including an increase of nearly \$2,000 earlier this year.

Integrity Commissioner Coulter Osbourne, in an 18-page report, suggested MPPs are underpaid compared to their federal and municipal counterparts and provided the impetus for this week's legislation.

While we certainly don't deny MPPs receive fair compensation, we cannot agree with Coulter's or McGuinty's belief that the level of compensation could become a deterrent to public service.

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh suggests the pay hike will keep good talent at Queen's Park and attract the "best and the brightest" for the future.

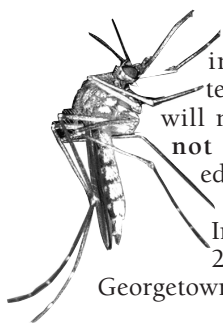
It has always been our understanding that those who devote their life to public service are not "in it for the money" but to better their community.

If MPPs so desperately wanted to bring their pay in line with that of their municipal or federal counterparts, raises should have been phased in over several years.

By doing so in one fell swoop when the province faces a huge deficit and funding shortfalls in education, health and other areas, only makes MPPs look greedy.

## Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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 for content and/or length.

Mail or drop off:

Independent & Free Press,  
280 Guelph St., Unit 29,  
Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1

E-mail:

jmcmghe@independentfreepress.com

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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 several newspapers published by Metroland Publishing & Distributing Ltd.

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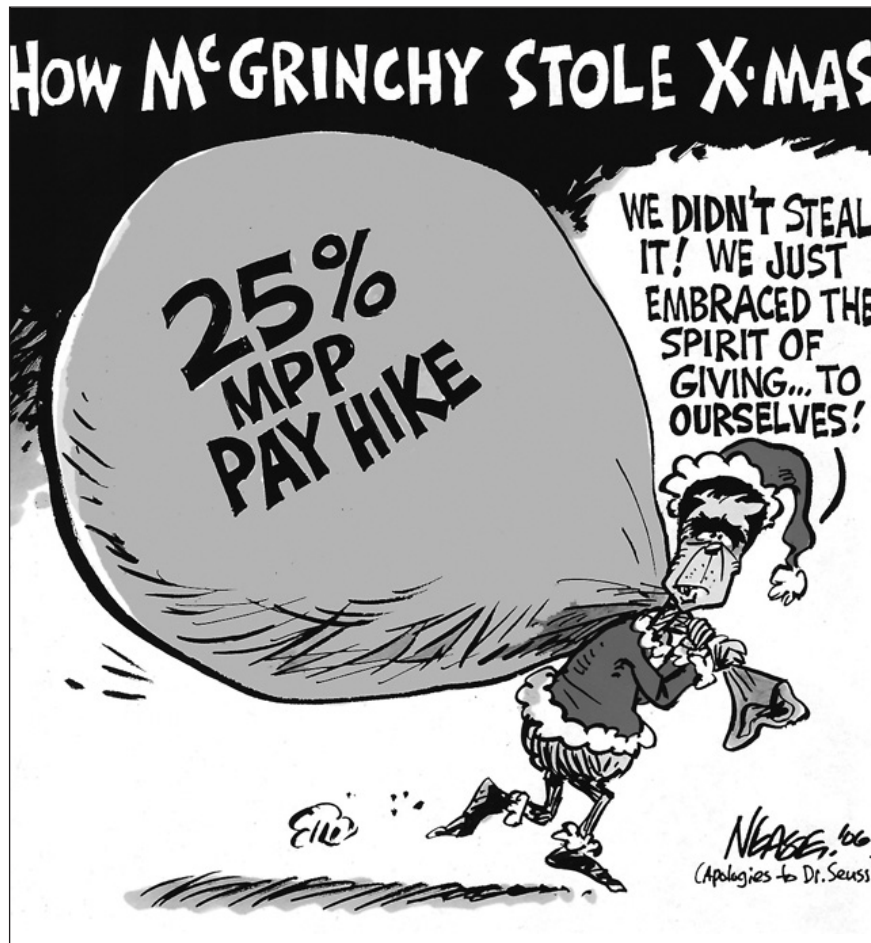
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Price: Store copies 50¢ each; Subscriptions \$26.00 per year by carrier; \$92.50 per year by mail in Canada; \$130.00 per year in all other countries. Plus G.S.T.

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.



Steve Nease



## STAFF DIRECTORY

**Publisher**  
Ken Nugent

**Advertising director**  
Steve Foreman  
(sforeman@independentfreepress.com)  
**Retail advertising manager**  
Cindi Campbell  
(ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)  
**Managing editor**  
John McGhie  
(jmcmghe@independentfreepress.com)  
**Distribution manager**  
Nancy Geissler  
(distribution@independentfreepress.com)

### ADVERTISING

**Retail Sales:**  
Jennifer Spencer (jspencer@independentfreepress.com)  
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Andrew Key (akey@independentfreepress.com)  
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### Real estate:

Sue Spizziri (realestate@independentfreepress.com)

### Classifieds:

Kristie Pells (classified@independentfreepress.com)

### ACCOUNTING

Rose Marie Gauthier, Jennifer Christie, Michelle Wimmer

### EDITORIAL

Cynthia Gamble: News editor  
(cgamble@independentfreepress.com)  
Ted Brown: Photography  
(tbrown@independentfreepress.com)  
Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer  
(ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)  
Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports  
(emaher@independentfreepress.com)

### PRODUCTION:

Mary Lou Foreman, Kevin Powell,  
Shelli Harrison, Dolores Black, Debbie MacDougall

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Politicians to blame for low voter turnout

Dear editor,

Re: Clerk to examine ways to improve voter turnout (Dec. 1).

It is not likely the Town clerk will be able to persuade more people to vote. The only ones who could do that would be the politicians themselves.

Inconvenience, distance, time, weather, bad driving conditions are not valid reasons for not voting; they are excuses. If one really wants to vote, he will do so.

Talking to people will reveal the real reasons why they don't vote. They simply don't care anymore. Why should they care when they see only the irresponsible, silly behaviour of elected politicians and have to live with the results of the foolishness?

Most eligible voters feel that it doesn't matter who gets elected. It will still be more of the same.

Politicians will continue to pursue their personal agendas with no consideration for what is good for the community or what their constituents want.

Communities are so large that the residents don't know the candidates. Newspaper and television ads don't provide insight into a person's character. Door-to-door canvassing is non-existent. Why would anyone make an effort to vote for a total stranger who won't make an effort to meet his constituents?

People are tired of having their taxes rise every year while they see

no serious effort to reduce expenses. When councillors want a new facility, if they want to sue a citizen for hurting their feelings (and can't win!) or if they want to throw themselves a party, they do it whether it is affordable or not. The taxpayers have to do without things they can't afford or wait until they have the money.

People are tired of being told of electricity and water shortages, seeing roads fall into disrepair, and having services reduced while the Town allows hundreds of new homes to be built every year. If the Town cannot cope with the existing population what kind of stupidity is it to keep expanding? The only obvious reason would be that the councillors want to expand their power over more people.

People are tired of the passing of bylaw after bylaw which regulates and restricts them.

People are tired of the silly, immature, knee-jerk decisions by councillors such as banning a citizen from all public buildings. If that citizen was guilty of uttering threats or of serious harrasment, why was he not charged? If he was disrupting business, why was he not banned from where business was conducted? Banning him from all public buildings appears to be a blatant abuse of power.

If we pay attention to what is happening in other places where the method of voting has been changed, we can only expect more problems at

the polls if the system is changed here. The present system worked well when people believed that their votes counted for something. That was when politicians were still trustworthy and responsible enough to deserve a vote.

Confidence in, and respect for, politicians is at an all-time low. To many citizens, a vote is nothing more than a symbolic acceptance of the status quo.

Eileen Hutcheson, Acton

### Church extends invitation for free Christmas dinner

Dear editor,

St. Alban Anglican Church invites all who are alone to share Christmas dinner with us on Christmas Day.

If you are alone or just lonely, if you are a couple or a family that wants to be part of a large family gathering you are invited to join with us at St. Alban's for Christmas dinner at 1 p.m. in the church hall. Please call the church office at 905-877-8323 and leave a message for a no-cost reservation.

If anyone in the community wishes to support this Christmas dinner, please call and leave a message and we will get back to you.

May the love of God richly bless you all this Christmas and hold you in the palm of his hand forever.

Reverend Grahame Stap  
and congregation,  
St. Alban the Martyr