

Province, premier show lack of fortitude

During last fall's provincial election campaign Premier Dalton McGuinty was quick to criticize Progressive Conservative leader John Tory for his support of funding for faith-based schools.

In retrospect, it could be argued that McGuinty won the election on this very issue as the voting public widely rejected the concept.

While it was too late to salvage his campaign, even Tory backed away from his foolish plan which would have seen public tax money go towards faith-based schools.

McGuinty, at the time— remember this was less than four months ago— boasted about his belief in a publicly-funded Ontario education system.

"My thinking certainly has reached a point where I believe that the most important thing that we can do for Ontario and for Ontario's children is to further strengthen public education," McGuinty said last fall.

So why, in the wake of the Toronto Public School Board's decision Wednesday to open an alternative Africentric school to fight a high dropout rate among black teens, has McGuinty quietly sat on the sidelines?

Stating he is not "personally comfortable" with the board's decision, but would abide by it, is not good enough. McGuinty, whose government is looking hypocritical, at best, and gutless, at worst, should be front and center on this issue and vehemently vowing to fight it anyway the Province can— including considering changes to the Education Act.

We agree with Loreen Small, the mother of Jordan Manners, a teen killed at a Toronto school last year, that this idea smacks of segregation.

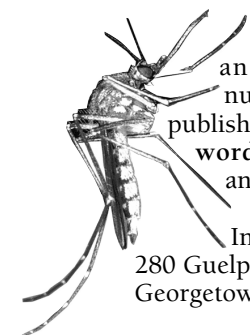
Such a school will only open the door for other race-based schools and does nothing to help race relations and, we argue, will only make matters worse. This is a very slippery slope the Toronto board is on.

Toronto school trustees let their community down with their decision.

Just as Ontario's premier has let down all Ontarians by choosing to show a backbone only when it was politically expedient to do so.

Something bugging you?

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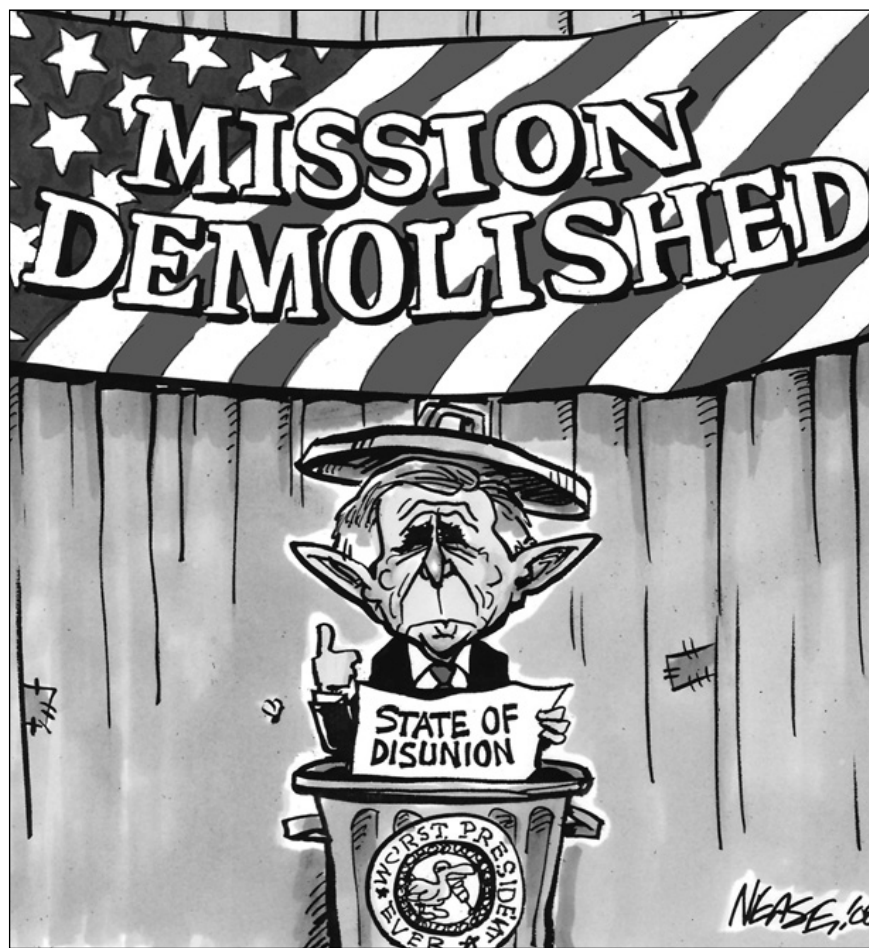
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Steve Nease



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why must Halton follow poor growth plan?

Dear editor,
I refer to your article Dec 21, 'Rural mayors join Bonnette in questioning growth plan', and would like to compliment Mayor Bonnette for having the courage to take the position he has in respect to the Ontario government's *Places to Grow* plan and its potential impact on the Region of Halton and specifically Halton Hills.

Clearly, other municipalities have seen the risks and costs associated with the program but have not, till Bonnette spoke up, had the willingness or audacity to openly question or challenge the higher level of government, which in itself is deeply concerning. That elected officials are simply prepared to toe the provincial

line unquestioningly and not 'rock the boat' on matters that have a far-reaching impact for their regions/municipalities and their citizens reflects a very sad state of affairs in this province.

The *Places to Grow* plan has designated lands south and west of Georgetown as a primary study area. This area consists mainly of active agricultural properties, farmland, used to produce food and agri-products that sustain Ontarians. Only approximately 6 percent of the total Canadian land mass is suitable for this purpose and yet the Ontario government continues to insist that regional and municipal governments pave over what little remains in this province in order to satisfy the need

for 'growth' of the Greater Toronto Area.

Why must the abysmal planning policies and models adopted by the likes of Mississauga and Brampton continue unchecked through Halton? Why must the taxpayers of Halton be confronted with higher assessments to satisfy the costs for new infrastructure related to growth when we don't have the funds to maintain what we've already got?

At a time when, as a nation, we are all striving to reduce pollution and reliance on oil, why do we continue to plan major residential development further away from major employment areas? With climate change now being more readily accepted and the prospect of longer growing seasons a reality; with wildlife habitat being increasingly under threat and species decline more noticeable, why are we so willing to bulldoze tree lots, raze open spaces and remove from existence the farmland that should be used for *Places to Grow* Ontario's food for today and agri-fuels for tomorrow.

Mayor Bonnette's question, "Why...?" is well-founded and I am sure supported by a large majority of Halton Hills residents who care about where and how we live today and in the future.

Tony Taylor, Glen Williams

Resident wants three-way stop at intersection

Dear editor,
In the Jan. 4 *Independent & Free Press* there was an article, "Speeds to be monitored at Oak/Argyll intersection".

About a year ago I sent a letter to the Town suggesting they make the intersection of Argyll and Huffman a three-way stop. My rationale was/is that there is currently no safe way to cross to the Gellert park or to the recreational centre. I did receive a response that indicated the suggestion would be investigated, but have not heard anything since.

The next intersection when going west on Argyll is the intersection of

Oak/Argyll. Speed is always an issue on Argyll and I frequently, with my family and dog, have to make a mad dash across Argyll to avoid the ignorant drivers who appear devoid of pedestrian respect or the posted speed limit.

My suggestion would have the impact, of not only making a safe place to cross, but would also slow the traffic down in both directions past Oak and Argyll. I hope Ward 4 Councillors Bob Inglis and John Duncan and the Town staff take this suggestion to heart before someone is hurt or killed on Argyll.

Michael Vincent, Georgetown

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