

# Comment

## Don't hold your breath

If the Ontario Liberal government is looking for any more leftover legacies from their predecessors to get rid of, they might consider the policy of pooling money from the GTA to help pay for Toronto's social services.

However, we're not going to hold our collective breaths waiting for them to do so because the Ontario Liberals would have to come up with extra money to fund those social services.

According to the Region's financial experts, Halton taxpayers have contributed \$230 million for Toronto's social services since pooling was created five years ago. That's just Halton's share. Peel, Durham and York have also pumped in several hundreds of millions of dollars over the same time period.

So, if the Ontario Liberals decided to scrap the GTA pooling plan altogether in order to appease the suburbs, they would have to fund the shortfall. The last time we looked, the Liberals were still claiming to be cash poor due to the \$5-billion deficit they say the departing Tories left for them.

In addition, neighbouring Hamilton,

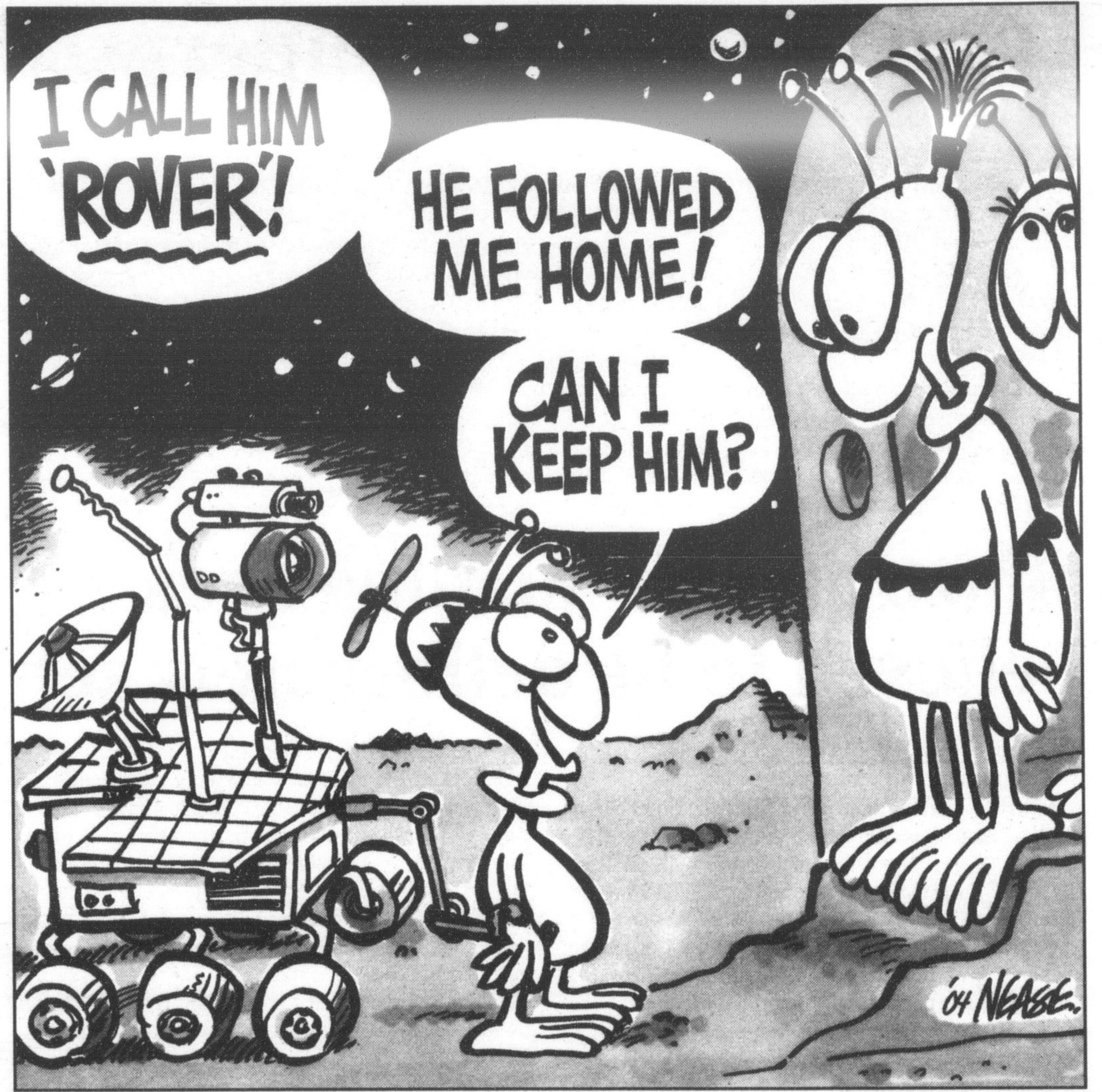
which is facing a multi-million deficit, is eyeing Toronto's pooling dollars with noticeable envy. Add them into the mix and Halton taxpayers will be seeing more of their property tax dollars leaving their community.

Actually, we're not so much opposed to the GTA pooling system itself as we are to the concept of using property tax dollars to fund social services costs in the first place.

Property taxes should go toward funding hard services such as roads, water systems and building facilities, which can be planned for and the costs calculated ahead of time.

Costs for services such as social programs are difficult to predict and often dependent on influences such as the economy, unemployment and interest rates, which local municipalities can't control.

While we sympathize with Halton Region's desire to remove itself from the costly GTA system, we feel the greater goal is to convince the Province to deliver on its promised 'New Deal' for municipalities to fund alternate sources of financing to the antiquated property tax system.



## Our Readers Write

### Reader says rural garbage pick-up will save him money and should also reduce littering

Dear Editor:

This Campbellville resident wants rural garbage pick up, and here are my reasons.

We have a private contractor that picks up once a week with a three-bag limit at a cost of \$540 a year.

The proposed addition by regional council to our tax bill is about \$100 per year — a cost saving of \$440 annually.

In today's economy everyone is looking for ways to save money. The cost proposed by the Region is fair and puts

money back in our pocket.

We also feel that this will help our environmentally-sensitive wetlands against illegal dumping of garbage in our roadside ditches.

Last spring we spent an afternoon picking up garbage from the ditches on Milborough Line in Campbellville that people were using as a dumping ground.

I believe we need rural garbage collection.

**Kevin Brackley  
Campbellville**

### Tax increase is disappointing, says reader

Dear Editor:

I applaud readers who take the time to write comments to the editor, like Charles Small who wants rural garbage to be a pay-per-bag system.

He states that many other municipalities have such a system and sell "books of tags, one of which must be attached to each bag of garbage." Mr. Small says this system is more flexible and is inherently fairer than an assessment-based system.

As Patrick Kelly states, our local politicians "promised citizens that growth would pay for itself, but are now telling us we will be getting a 2 per cent increase" on our tax rate.

This is what causes me concern. Mayor Gord Krantz stated it was okay to raise the tax rate in line with inflation, that there has not been an increase for 10 years.

Just last year, the average property assessment increased by 16.9 per cent. So there's already an increase in property tax revenue in excess of the inflation rate.

In fact, in a Champion issue before Christmas, it was suggested that when property assessments increase, the tax rate normally goes down. But not in Milton, where it went up 2 per cent.

I wonder how Canadians would feel if the GST rate increased with the inflation rate. If a tire cost \$50 in 1994, the federal government got 7 per cent GST, or \$3.50. If the same tire cost \$100 in 2004, the government got 7 per cent GST, or \$7. The inflation rate is taken care of in the price of the tire.

In the case of property owners, the assessed value of our property has increased 800 per cent in excess of the inflation rate. To further

increase this by factoring in a higher tax rate is lunacy.

Now Mr. Krantz, are we being asked to pay a higher tax rate? How much more is our tax rate going to increase for garbage pick-up?

As another letter writer asked, where are those dollars going from the casino on Guelph Line? Shouldn't that cover garbage pick up?

Shame on our municipal government for not being able to balance the books. Perhaps our elected representatives could outline just how much more revenue they collect in taxes — and from the slots at Mohawk — than they did two or three years ago.

I'd gamble it's a lot more than the 1.6 per cent inflation rate.

**Brian Macdonnell  
Campbellville**

Have your say on an issue with a letter to the editor. Fax your letters to (905) 878-4943, or e-mail them to [miltone@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltone@haltonsearch.com).

### Pud

by Steve Nease



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