



# OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Bad news outweighs good stuff

After years of debate, waffling and inaction on municipal and school board governance, disentanglement and property tax reform, Ontario has been turned inside out and upside down.

But the fact the Mike Harris government has confronted these issues head-on with a package of sweeping reforms doesn't mean the solutions are, in many cases, the right ones.

Megaweek can best be characterized as a combination of good news and bad news, with much of the good news outweighed by the bad.

Kicking off the week with the good news portion was Education Minister Education Minister John Snobelen, who firmly put the lid on out-of-control school board spending, tax increases and misdirected classroom cuts by administrators and trustees. By tying the purse strings of the new regional boards and stripping away their taxing authority, Mr. Snobelen was able to reduce the number of school boards and avoid the megacity consequences of higher costs and more bureaucracy.

But the cheering about education funding coming off residential property taxes was quickly muted the following day.

That's when Janet Ecker the social services minister, let it be known that the province was dropping full or shared responsibility for such soft services such as welfare, co-op housing, child care, public health, nursing homes and long-term care.

And although the province said it will be establishing a permanent \$1 billion Community Reinvestment Fund, it's the municipalities — not the province — that actually will be paying for it.

The only devolution of responsibilities that made any sense was the decision to hand a tab to some 576 municipalities that have been receiv-

## Let's Talk Taxes



with PAUL PAGNUELO

ing local OPP policing at the expense of all provincial taxpayers.

Wednesday of that week was another good news day, with announcements that the full cost of local transit, roads, sewers and water treatment would be a municipal responsibility.

But Thursday was a return to more bad news, with Finance Minister Ernie Eves confirming the province was going ahead with Actual Value Assessment (AVA) — the most complex, most unstable and highest cost property tax reform option that was open to the government.

The week was filled with tax shifts that make it difficult to distinguish the immediate winners from the losers. But moving volatile social services — clearly a provincial responsibility — over to property taxation can only spell bad news in the long run for property owners. And once taxpayers come to realize that AVA is like water sloshing around the bottom of a rowboat, the only people popping the champagne corks will be the assessment bureaucracy at Queen's Park, who managed to stick the Harris government with a politically explosive powder keg.

"Let's talk taxes" is a commentary provided by the Ontario Taxpayers Federation. Commentaries are by the OTF's executive director Paul Pagnuelo.

## Making your point with a points system

For more than 25 years, U.S. psychologist Gerald Patterson has done pioneer research on compliance and aggression in children. His books have stood the test of time and are held as the standard against which other programs in this area are measured.

The basic program for teaching cooperation and compliance goes something like this: First, you sit your 10-year-old down and say, "Max, we've been keeping track of how often you listen to us and we want to try something new."

Max, acting like he didn't even hear says, "Can I go outside now?" Dad, starting to get mad, points to the chair and says, "Sit down a minute — you can go out after we've had a chance to talk." Max, still standing, says "Why me? Look at the little princess over there! She never has to do anything. You always liked her better than me."

You should avoid this sidetracking maneuver altogether. "Starting now, we're going to help you learn to cooperate with other people. I think it'll be fun: Every time you listen, you'll get a point on this index card. You can earn a whole bunch of things with those points — staying up a



## Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

half hour late, renting a Nintendo game, going fishing, money — and you can chose whatever you want."

Some kids buy in right away, some don't. Max is a hard case, "I don't want no points for nothing."

Don't lecture or get mad when he doesn't comply, just subtract a point. Record it on the index card, posted on the refrigerator. At the end of each day, tell him how many points he earned (or lost) and what he has earned (or lost). Max loved to stay up late, so he got an extra 30 minutes if he ended up with plus five points and he went to bed 30 minutes early if he ended up with minus five points each day.

## Looking Back...



Grace Anglican Church officials welcomed the Bishop of Huron, Rt. Rev. George Luxton on Ascension Day, June 1962. The bishop, who lived in Milton during his childhood but left 60 years ago, was guest speaker at the evening service. People's Warden Kenneth Watson presented a copy of "Halton's Pages of the Past" to the bishop at a social half hour following the service. Admiring the book are, from left, Mr. Watson, Rector the Rev. D.A. Powell, Bishop Luxton, Canon F.H. Mason, and Rector's Warden Kenneth Brush.

## Bug is beginning to bug me

Do we want to talk about that Volkswagen bug again? That little monster that sits seemingly benignly in the driveway, planning its next nasty trick.

Why couldn't hubby have found a second hand car that needed less attention and less cash? No, he had to relive his youth with the VW. It doesn't help that the principal driver, the 18-year-old, is mechanically inept, or rather, indifferent. The latest incident really took the cake.

The aforementioned teen came home from school one afternoon casually mentioning that the oil light in the car was flashing. I flipped out. (I do that a lot.) Ever since I can remember, men (never women) have been warning me about the red light that would spell doom for the vehicle if I did not stop it immediately. For all I knew the motor would shudder, then crash ignominiously onto the pavement. Yet here was this kid telling me he was still driving the car around town. Yikes!

It was leaking oil almost as quickly as we were pouring it in. We had our very own oil spill right in the driveway. I followed our son and the



## On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

ailing VW to the garage, hoping the car would make it.

The verdict was something about a main seal. The word gasket came into the conversation too. I can't say I could get a clear mental picture of the problem, only that it cost us more than \$200, although it could have cost as little as \$5 if hubby, who knew better, had carried out some preventative maintenance when he was putting in this third motor. As I philosophically say, money is no object; in fact, in our household it is mostly nonexistent.

No sooner had that catastrophe been averted than the car, up until now a perky little get-up-and-go kind of creature, dug in its tires and refused to start. Out came the extension cord and the battery charger, but even then our son could not count on the vehicle working away from home. Since he had already used up his free towing through the automobile club, he didn't want to take any chances.

When it wasn't too nasty outside, hubby took a peek and determined that there were faulty battery connections. He replaced those and still the car refused to show any spirit. It seemed that perhaps it wasn't firing on all spark plugs, but the latest I heard is that hubby now has a starter motor on order.

I wouldn't trust that car to take me anywhere, yet I am amazed that all these unfortunate inconveniences have not greatly upset our son, who no doubt continues on some level to be happy just to have his own set of wheels, albeit an unreliable package of nuts, bolts and pistons.

While the VW waits in the driveway for yet another part our son has reverted to using hubby's and my vehicles. And we thought the VW was costing us money.

Car number three, the station wagon, is alive and well. I am keeping my fingers crossed that it will remain that way. And we can only pray for the bug.