

MPP visits Ridge, endorses changes

The MPP for Muskoka-Georgian Bay has endorsed a plan for large changes at the Regional Division of the Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene. Moreover, Ken Black is confident that the Ministry

remarks after attending the MHC's third annual barbecue for staff and patients, sponsored by the Community Advisory Board. Black was able to appear at the luncheon for Oak Ridge and Regional patients.

He took time to talk about the rebuilding of Oak Ridge, the maximum security mental hospital, which he described as "a top priority." Black had just returned from meeting with Caplan and former Minister of Health Murray Elston, and both reemphasized their commitment to change at the Ridge.

However, they gave Black no indication as to when the government plans to initiate any change. Any expenditures for the MHC cannot come from existing funds with the Ministry of Health, money which Black says is already committed to the maintenance of the health care system through doctor's bills, operating expenses and nursing care.

For Oak Ridge to be rebuilt "another ministry would have to accept less" money for its programs, he said.

Black first visited the structure during last summer's provincial election campaign. (Oak Ridge is officially in Tay Township,

part of his riding, while the Regional is in Penetanguishene — a different riding represented now by Al McLean). He says his reaction was "no different than anyone else's." He describes it as "a depressing place" and says "any hope of providing adequate care is not reasonable."

"It should have been torn down years ago."

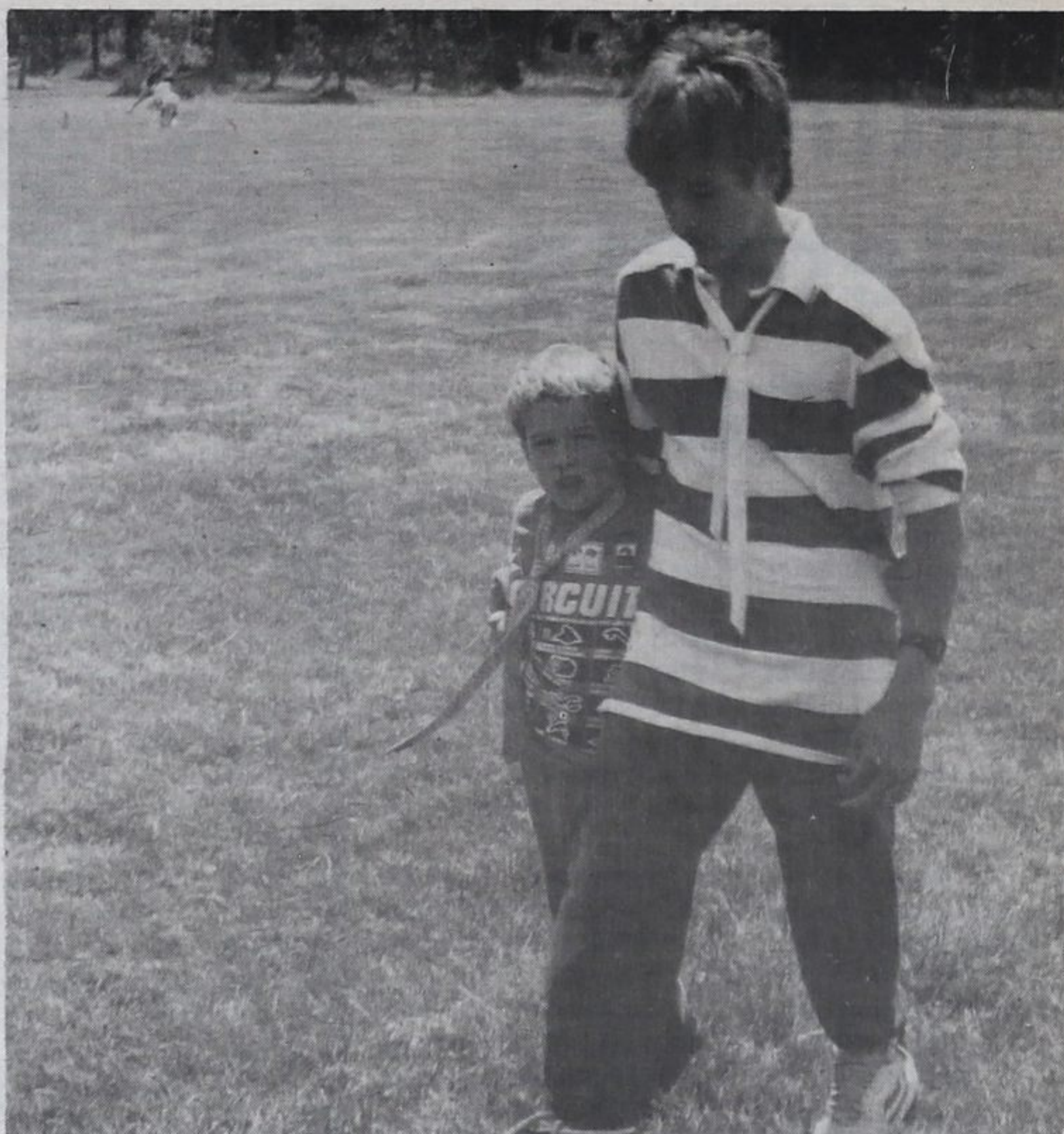
However, he is more optimistic about the other half of the MHC. Although "the facility is perhaps a bit overcrowded, there is some flexibility to provide services."

But ultimately the taxpayer will have to pay for any changes, something which Black says "people realize." To offset rising

costs for health care, the MPP suggests that preventative medicine should be stressed. "A healthier lifestyle should be the new thrust." Black includes everything from not smoking to proper diet to "control of stress" in this category.

Though he doesn't want "to be too critical of the previous Conservative government," Black says things like health care, housing and roads were not allocated sufficient funding in the past.

But he says this has all changed with the Peterson government and Ontario now has "the strongest economy in the western world — an economy of the future which is moving into the 21st century."



Triple run

Victoria Harbour Public School students John Richards (right), grade 8, helps David Hubbard, grade 1, in the three-legged race held during the school's annual Fun Day, last Friday.



Black

of Health will approve of the plan.

"There's no question that the plan is consistent with the government's direction."

He describes that direction as "a move from a centralized to a community framework, a goal articulated by Mrs. (Elinor) Caplan."

(Caplan is the Minister of Health).

A community framework for health care, Black says, is one where services are deinstitutionalized "where it's practical."

The MPP made the

Breastfeeding art the topic

Tonight (Wednesday) begins the first of four monthly discussions titled The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, sponsored by the Midland-Penetang LaLeche League.

At 8 p.m. at 224 Tiny Beaches Rd. N., the first discussion will center

around the Advantages of Breastfeeding To The Mother and Baby.

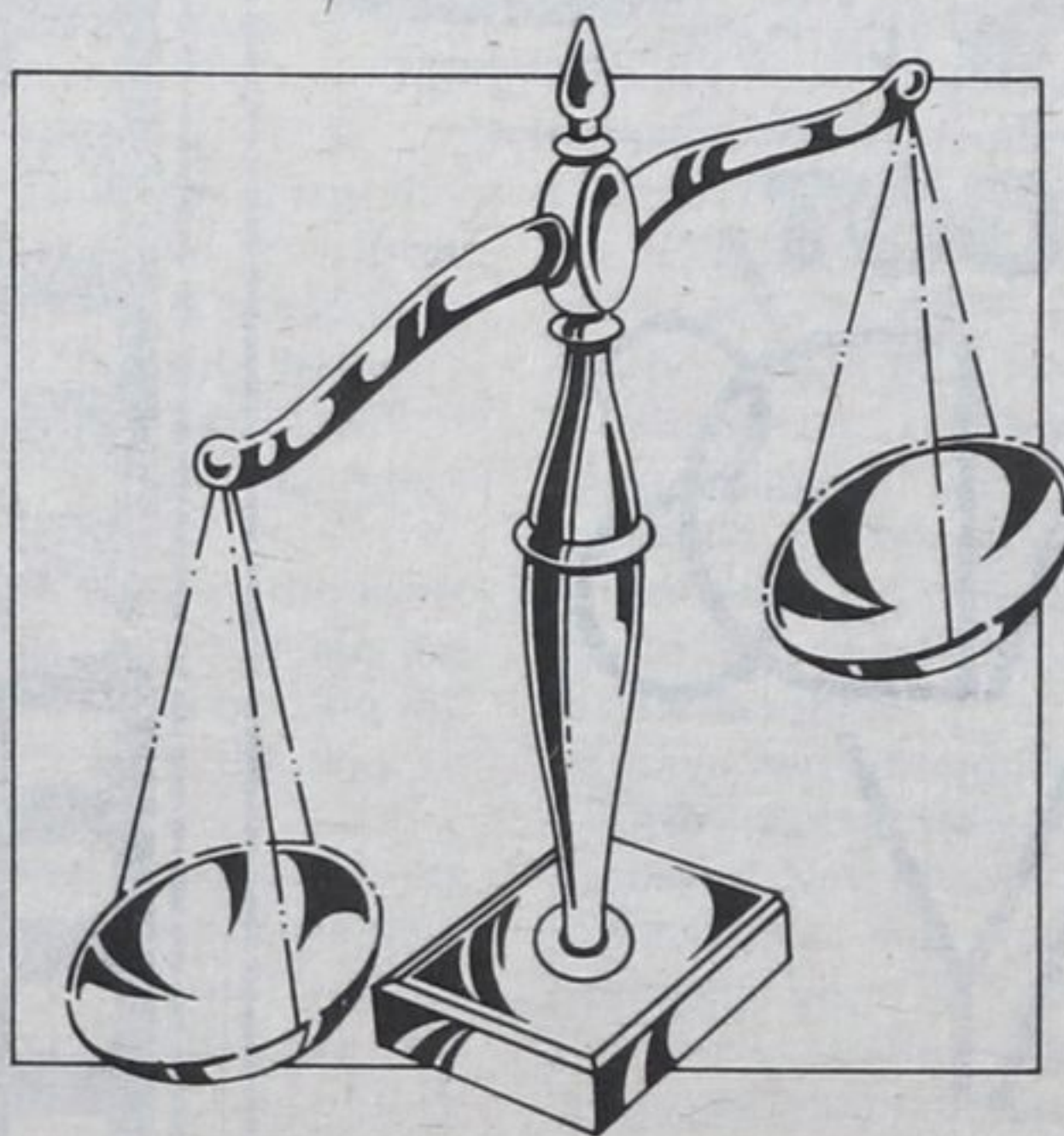
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