

Ministry doles out building funds unfairly

The Minister of Education has shown once again there is no fair and balanced way of allocating capital building funds, especially in the Region of York.

In a somewhat anomalous announcement, York County Board of Education Chairman Don Cousens Monday night revealed Dr. Betty Stephenson had in fact affirmed financing for the new Risebrough elementary school. There were no strings attached to the commitment so long as the board intended to keep Risebrough as its top priority on the annual capital expenditure forecast.

There has been little doubt over the past two months, even with agitation from ratepayer and community groups, that Risebrough wouldn't be the number one priority. Planning and development staff of the board admitted it anticipated no change in the top five schools the planning and building committee had been discussing.

There's nothing wrong with getting a phone call from the minister's office on the day of a board meeting saying 'yes, you've got your money for one of the schools you've asked for'.

But what about that other school board, whose needs for new school buildings happen to be more pressing than the public school system's. The Separate School Board has known for quite some time it would have to deal with areas of acute growth in Markham, Vaughan and Newmarket.

Superintendent of Business Administration Ed Joyce acknowledged a similar telephone conversation with ministry officials confirmed funds have been reserved for a Catholic school in Milliken.

However, at noon yesterday, Mr. Joyce said he had to run down to Queen's Park for clarification of conditions on the approval of funds for the Milliken school.

He didn't know why there were any conditions, period, or what they were. Those sound like two pretty good questions.

The school the Separate Board is using to hold the overflow of kids from the Milliken area (John

XXXIII in Unionville) is currently operating at over 200 per cent of capacity and now has 12 portables on site.

Both boards have asked for about the same amount of money for the first five projects on their respective priority lists. The Separate Board has already been granted allocation for its number two project — a \$600,000 addition onto a school in Sharon. But the money won't be available until 1982. Of course, it would like to have it now.

Who knows what kind of approvals will come from the ministry in January, once it has looked at forecasts from around the province? In York, one board needs two permanent schools, the other needs four — out of five priorities.

If there are plans for the Ministries of Housing and Education to work more closely in the planning of communities there must be a more equitable way of making school funding allocations.

This is not the first time the YRRCSSB has had to spend extra energy (and money) to justify its needs. Last year, it asked for a school in Glen Shields and was turned down. The public board requested and received money for a school in the same subdivision but then sent the allocation back, claiming its population projections were premature.

Before the new Willowbrook school was given approval, the YCBE was given a choice of where it might spend the allocation — on Willowbrook or for a school in Risebrough. After much gnashing of teeth, Willowbrook was chosen.

The Catholics have never been given such choices — they perfunctorily accept what they can get.

The week Willowbrook got official approval, the minister made another shifty phone call to Don Cousens and said she would respect the board's decision if it felt it could better justify an elementary school in Risebrough rather than Willowbrook.

The ministry not only holds the deck but it appears it also deals from the bottom.

Briefly, then...

CHRISTMAS??

Don't look now, but in this week's edition of your Community Calendar on Page C-1, there are no fewer than three Christmas events planned.

Sneaks up on you, doesn't it?

TOPSY TURVY

On Mill Street, east of Bathurst, there's only one sign on the side of the road, and that's to announce Richmond Hill is a Block Parent community.

Only trouble is, the sign's upside down.

PRETTY, PRETTY

For years, the male has frowned at the female who drives her car and at the same time, combs her hair, puts on lipstick or generally tidies herself up while cruising down the road. The female does not own this practice. Mon-

day, on Major Mackenzie Drive, a truck driver spent several seconds combing his hair while maneuvering his Cliffside Pipelayers vehicle through the early morning traffic.

BUMP AHEAD

As the Markham Works Committee drew to a close last Thursday and prepared to slip into the second segment of the evening — the Traffic and Transit Committee — Councillor Ron Dancy noted Highway 7 is developing quite a bad dip in the road near the bridge at Kennedy Rd. His remarks were directed at Dipen Mukherjee, town engineer, who answered:

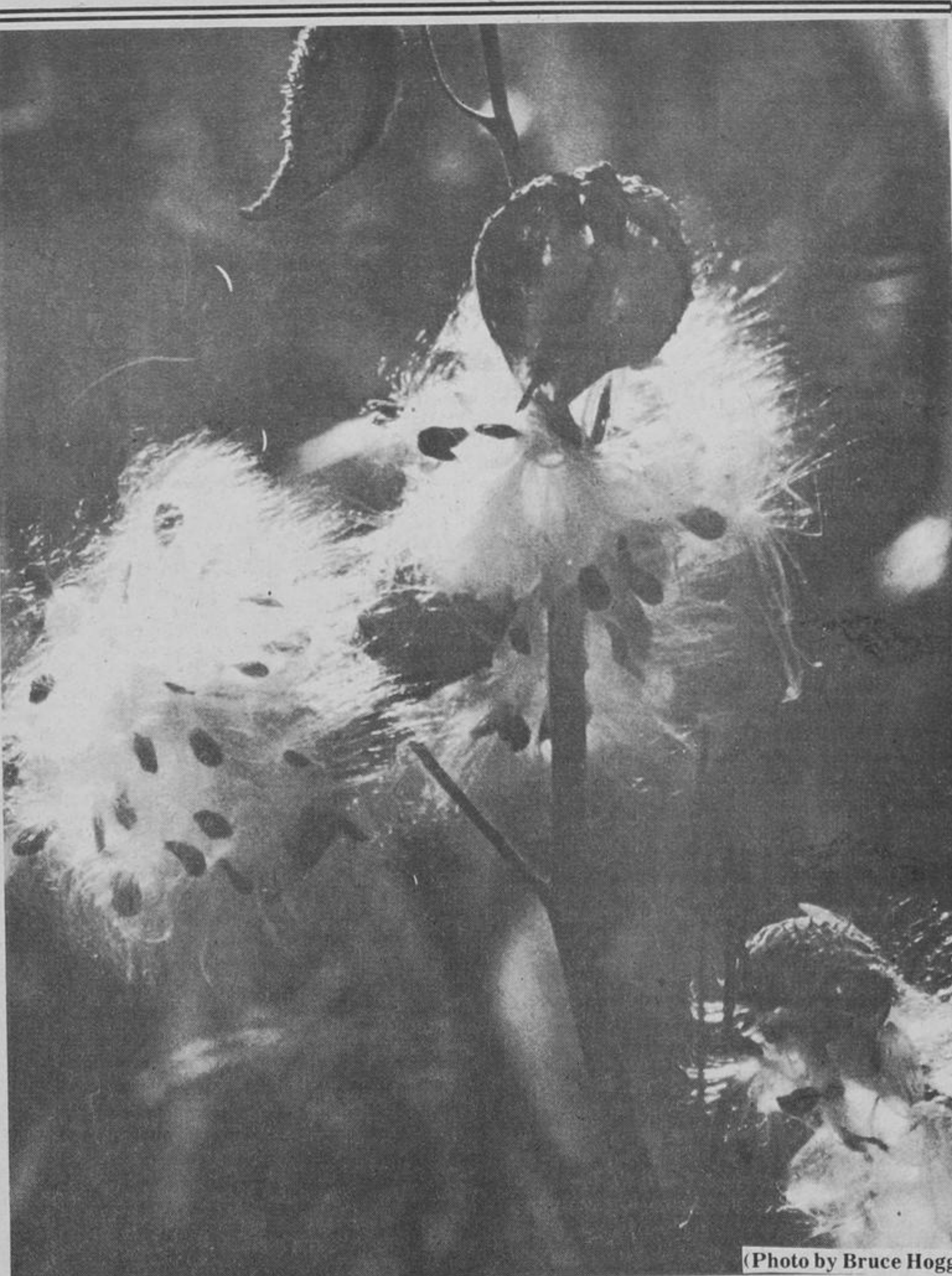
"Oh, we know about that. We have to get a 'Bump Ahead' sign put in there."

Who said Markham isn't on the job?

ENERGY SAVERS

A sign depicting GO Transit and Richmond Hill Transit buses as "Energy Savers" will be erected by the town in the next couple of weeks.

Just to show the town is doing their part to conserve energy, the sign will not be illuminated by electricity at night.



(Photo by Bruce Hogg)

By BOB RICE

Rice's ideas for your kids at Christmas

Last week I admitted my addiction, to reading almost every catalogue that has ever been written.

I especially get great delight by poring through the pages of advertisements for all of the neat toys that are now being offered to our children.

There seems to be no limit to the ingenuity of the designers of these miniature marvels but, sometimes, I think that they go too far.

A few years ago you may remember that the manufacturer of one line of dolls introduced one particularly gem that featured an "anatomically correct" little boy.

Then we had the baby doll that not only eats what you feed it but also does the other job that has been the scourge of mothers since time began. Last year one company brought out a doll that develops a diaper rash and heaven knows what they have in store for us this year!

In recent times the old cap pistol has been replaced by laser guns that "emit seven different sounds" and the old standby Dinky Toys are fighting a battle against space crawlers and lunar sample diggers.

Just how far will these purveyors of fun and leisure go? Well gang... for the second year in a row... here comes Rice's Perilous Predictions of Fantastic Future Fun And Frivolity!

First of all for the little girls —

GIRLS

THE HUMBLE HOLLEE FRANKLIN STOVE — Little girls everywhere will be delighted to use this exact replica of Grandma's old cooker. The set includes one stove made of cast iron complete with four cooking surfaces and a large oven, a half-cord of firewood and 20 boxes of old wooden matches. You may want to add to the basic set by purchasing the Humble Hollee pressure cooker, the Humble Hollee Pots'n'Pans and the Humble Hollee First Aid Burn Kit. (Batteries not included) ... (or needed)

BARBEE'S DISCO DUDS — Barbie takes to the floor with the latest in disco fashions created especially for her by Bruce of Uptergrove! Dress your favorite fashion doll in the Spangles 'n Sparkles Pantswit that glows in the dark and features 400 teeny weeny light bulbs hidden in the seams. As the beat goes on, Barbie can get it on in her Foxy Lady Dress complete with an Ermine Boogie Collar and high denim boots. Don't forget about her partner Kenny and his John Ravolting Dance Shirt featuring the bare chest look with a "real fake belly button" and his simulated kangaroo dancin' shoes made from real simulated kangaroos!

Now to the boys —

BOYS

THE CENTURY 25 STAR BATTLER — Blast off into the 25th Century with this working model of a real Star Battler as used by Bic Rogers! Real pulsar engines emit smoke and flames as you streak across the living room rug at Mach 23. The onboard computer will track the aliens as you launch your interceptors and track them on the radar display which also can be converted to a video game at the flick of a switch! When the smoke clears you will once again have defeated the enemy and triggered a call to the fire department by your neighbors. (Batteries are included... fire extinguisher is optional)

BREAKER! BREAKER! SMOKEY REPORT! — Hey good buddies here's one for the road. This super fine set comes complete with three CB equipped four wheelers, an 18-wheeler and two black and white smokies. Set up the 3,000 feet of track, plug in the power pack and put the rubber side down for hours of excitement! A real good time can be had as the four wheelers try to find the smokies hiding in any of 35 locations along the roadway. As soon as the first bear is sighted the lead car will automatically break-one-oh and give his twenty. The remaining cars will all reduce speed as the 18-wheelers scream on by only to get caught and have to shell out some green stamps. Too bad he was up on nineteen! Comes complete with hidden laneways, billboards, speed zone signs and 20 pre-recorded CB sayings such as "put the pedal to the metal", "He's got a picture taker with him" and "They're in the woods, behind the trees, thank the lawd we've got CB's!" 3s and 8s.

And finally... the ultimate toy for the executive —

BRAINBUNGLER — Put away your paperwork and clear your desktop... Brainbunger is here! You may have tried other gadgets designed for today's busy man about town but we guarantee that Brainbunger will keep you entertained and puzzled for hours. Unlike other computer games on the market, Brainbunger doesn't give you the questions... well the answers! YOU HAVE TO GUESS WHAT THE QUESTION WAS! Try Brainbunger today... you will never be the same again! (Batteries and 5000 answer tape included... Valium available by prescription only)

Well gang... there you have them. Some of these toys will, no doubt, be available in the near future and others may never make it past the drawing board. Be that as it may, I'm willing to bet that somewhere out there... in that great toy factory in the sky... some clever genius is right now presenting a brilliant new idea that will eventually come on the market to drain our batteries... and our pocketbooks!

The ol' Millpond Philosopher once said. "The highway to fortune is paved with copper... gold is just too darn expensive!"

LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

Learning about hydro power

By SHAARON HAY
Liberal Staff Writer

Ontario Hydro is spending a lot of time and money these days on public relations — they seem to be fair game to almost everyone (including myself in a previous Sprinklings column).

One such PR gesture is the Essa Demonstration Centre, near Barrie.

This Ontario Hydro project is of particular interest to people in the Thornhill-Richmond Hill area, where the 500,000 volt lines will be built next year.

The centre was built in response to the concerns of rural communities for the effects of 500,000 volt lines on farming operations.

Essa is located under the only operating 500,000 volt lines in Ontario transmission lines which run from Abitibi Canyon to Kleinburg.

Last Wednesday Ontario Hydro invited me to sit in on one such demonstration and I shall try to relate what I saw — as objectively as possible.

Economics and efficiency are the two main reasons Ontario Hydro has switched from transmitting power at 230,000 volts, we were told.

Towers carrying 500,000 volt lines can carry from four to eight times as much power, meaning one 500 kV tower can carry the equivalent power of four 230 kV towers — therefore, fewer towers are required and less land.

A film was shown at the centre to demonstrate two effects produced by hydro transmission lines, electro static effects and electro magnetic effects.

BULB GLOWS

Effects of being under 500,000 volt lines were likened to being near your television, an electric drill or a horseshoe magnet.

An electric drill, or any of the tools found in the average basement workshop, has an electromagnetic field greater than that produced under the lines.

The film showed how a person could stand under the lines holding a fluorescent light bulb and have the bulb glow.

This is rather frightening, but to get the correct perspective we were told the same person could hold the same bulb while standing close to the distributor cap of an auto, and the same glow would result.

Equation — 500 kV lines are no worse than the modern auto as far as a field of energy produced is concerned.

It was pointed out in the film the possibility of problems are far greater with microwave ovens than the 500 kV lines.

Demonstrations inside the centre were carried on to show there is a field of energy produced under the lines but it is no greater than produced by common every day gadgets in our life and with a little common sense it can be eliminated.

These items were thought provoking and credible, but the most impressive, lasting results, for me anyway, were the outdoor demonstrations directly under the 500,000 volt lines.

Last Wednesday, you might recall, was foggy, wet and drizzling not an ideal day to be under the lines (if any day is ideal).

CRACKLING LINES

Hydro representatives informed me the effects of the demonstration would not be as profound because the moisture in the air would take a lot of the charge induced on the equipment to ground.

One advantage (??) of such a moist day was the opportunity to hear the so called "crackling" of the lines, audible only during wet weather.

Apparently water drops produce the noise by collecting on the transmission line conductors.

Dry days the lines are quiet but moisture causes a sound I would describe as light rain falling on a thin plastic. Anyone farther away than the edge of the right of way would likely not hear the sound.

One of the hydro reps brandished a large meter to show there were three kV per metre under the lines. He then walked off to show at 75 feet the meter reading had dropped to .5 kV per metre.

This test was to show that an electric field does exist under the lines. I did understand this fact but was more impressed by the next test to prove the same principle.

An ordinary umbrella was erected and I was asked to hold the umbrella by the wooden handle and point a finger close to the metal shaft.

What resulted was an audible static charge between my finger and the stalk.

At this point Canadian regulations for distance from the transmission lines to the ground were compared with other countries — Canada 40 feet, United States 35 feet and the U.S.S.R. 26 feet of clearance.

"SHOCKING"

To feel the effects even stronger, I climbed on top of a totally insulated metal trailer, about another 12 feet closer and tried the umbrella experiment again.

I guess to say it was "shocking" is a little puny, but I was not only shaken by the charge, I could see a spark.

These sparks are uncomfortable and annoying, I was told, but not harmful.

It struck me funny at this point to imagine drivers passing on the highway having no idea what was going on and watching me standing on top of the trailer — just like Mary Poppins.

The next experiment was to show the effect of the lines on four different types of fences, running parallel under the lines — the worst possible conditions.

The first was a link fence, with barbed wire and all wood posts to ground.

When I touched the wire there was no shock, but apparently on a good dry day if you put your tongue on the wire it would be similar to doing the same (senseless) trick with a nine-volt battery.

The second, a link fence with barbed wire and wood and steel posts — again no reaction, steel posts form a better ground.

Number three, an electric fence, specially insulated with no contact with the ground, gave quite a tingle. Apparently about 1,000 volts had built up on this fence, but hydro reps informed me the normal charge put on by a farmer to keep his cattle from wandering is from 4,000 to 12,000 volts. (Poor Cows.)

The fourth fence was a chain link, completely insulated without a ground, and taking a charge of about 200 volts the day I was there. Apparently normally this fence carried about 900 volts.

The fascinating part of this experiment was that just by touching one weed to the fence, as a ground, the charge was eliminated.

Next experiment was a vehicle parked under the lines, completely insulated by being parked on plastic blocks. This car induced about 1,200 volts, but by attaching a chain and lowering it to the grass the charge was taken right off.

The moral of the demonstration by Ontario Hydro seems to be that the lines may not be beautiful, but they are necessary and not dangerous.

THE Liberal

VOLUME 102, NUMBER 17

TELEPHONES

Editorial, Display 884-8177
Classified, 884-1105
Circulation 884-0981
Toronto customers 881-3373

Subscription rates: By mail \$13.00 per year in Canada \$26.00 per year outside of Canada. By carrier \$1.00 every four weeks. Single copy sales 25 cents. No mail delivery where carrier service exists. Second Class Mail Registration Number 0190.

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Printing & Publishing Ltd.

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