

### Warm reception for Premier

While Ontario Premier David Peterson received a gift from Markham historian John Lunau at a \$200-a-plate function at the ChimoHotel Thursday evening, anti-

abortionists picketed the Premier from across the street. Mr. Peterson made a short speech at the function which was attended by prominent locals including Mar-

kham Mayor Carole Bell and Richmond Hill Mayor Al Duffy.

# Markham station owner fights Esso

Saying he has "no alternative but to fight," Markham Esso gas station owner Brian Palin says he will oppose Imperial Oil's attempt to fire him over what the company views as sub-standard service at his station.

In a letter Mr. Palin received Monday, March 31, Imperial Oil told him he was in breach of his contract and had 10 days to leave

the station on Hwy 48 at 16th Ave. that he has leased for five years.

The company, which holds regular inspections of all its stations, said Mr. Palin's business was not living up to Esso standards in its service to customers at the pumps.

After spending the late hours of Wednesday night and Thursday morning at the station to make

sure he was not locked out, Mr. Palin was granted a court injunction allowing him to stay open for 10 days.

In the business for 22 years, he says he is confused about what Esso is trying to accomplish.

"We run sort of a family operation here," he said. "I might have had four complaints in five years. I'm very upset."

Mr. Palin purchased his business for a \$20,000 franchise fee in 1980. That fee will not be returned if his contract is terminated.

He says that since he has taken over, the station has received awards from Esso for its service and image and says it has been appraised at over 90 per cent.

He adds he expects to sell about 3.6 million litres of gas this year, a 2.2 million increase from when he first took over the station.

"I try to run a neat, clean operation. I've never had any trouble before," he said. "I don't know what's going to happen."

Support for Mr. Palin has come from other franchise owners and some of his long-time customers. A representative from the Shell Dealers' Association has offered financial aid if he needs it.

And the Esso Dealer Advisory Board, in a meeting held Thursday, expressed concern over Mr. Palin's plight and have drafted a letter asking management for a meeting to clarify the problem.

"I think that's great. I'm really pleased with the support I've been getting," he said.

Greg McDonald, a media spokesman for Imperial Oil, says since last September Mr. Palin has been warned in writing about the service at the station. He says the company is terminating the contract as a last resort.

"It is not a decision taken lightly and it's not taken before a number of warnings. We don't do this for spite," he said. "Obviously there wasn't a wide range of improvement."

Paul Jacobs, Mr. Palin's lawyer, says Imperial Oil's site



**BRIAN PALIN**  
Challenges Esso

inspections are unfair with station owners having no opportunity to review or challenge the appraisals.

He also says he thinks the company is trying to make money by replacing franchise owners with short-term dealer contracts.

Mr. Palin, who only remembers receiving one letter of warning, has decided against going to binding arbitration at this point. "They (Imperial Oil) said you either go to arbitration or you're out," said Mr. Jacobs. "That's holding an axe blade at the guy's jugular."

"All I'm concerned about is staying in business," Mr. Palin said. "Without any hassles."

## Bad water still big problem

By ERKKI POHJOLAINEN

Despite the fact that several new wells have been drilled, some residents of Ballantrae are still facing contaminated drinking water.

Ward 2 Councillor Ron Robb headed up a Steering Committee meeting this week to discuss the situation further. Members are looking into the quality and quantity of water at various levels in an effort to decide how the community's needs can best be met.

In an interview, neighbors Gwen Ingram, Sharron Powell and Diane Giasson told the Weekender they're continually faced with bureaucratic funding delays.

The problem first surfaced 10 years ago when the Powell's daughter Pamela, then only five-weeks-old, almost died from severe diarrhea. At first, doctors thought the problem was caused by food allergies but the day after she came home from hospital, her

condition had not improved.

The treating physician then suggested they should have their water tested to see if contamination might be the problem. It was.

The Ministry of the Environment suggested a new well was required. After a year-and-a-half of testing, a report said road salt, at over 1,000 parts per million (ppm), was responsible, Mrs. Powell said.

The Ministry of the Environment agreed to drill a new well for the family.

Joyce and Randy Huskisson, previous occupants of the Ingram home, learned their water was contaminated and drilled a new well for which they were later reimbursed.

The Giasson's water was declared suitable for consumption.

Two years ago, the same problem surfaced but this time, the sodium chloride (salt) level was lower.

A study report concluded that all 79 wells in the area should be replaced, Mrs. Giasson said.

Mrs. Powell said the Ministry of the Environment agreed to pay 100 per cent of the cost for a new well if road salt was the contaminant. The level of salt in these wells is determined to be up to 225 ppm.

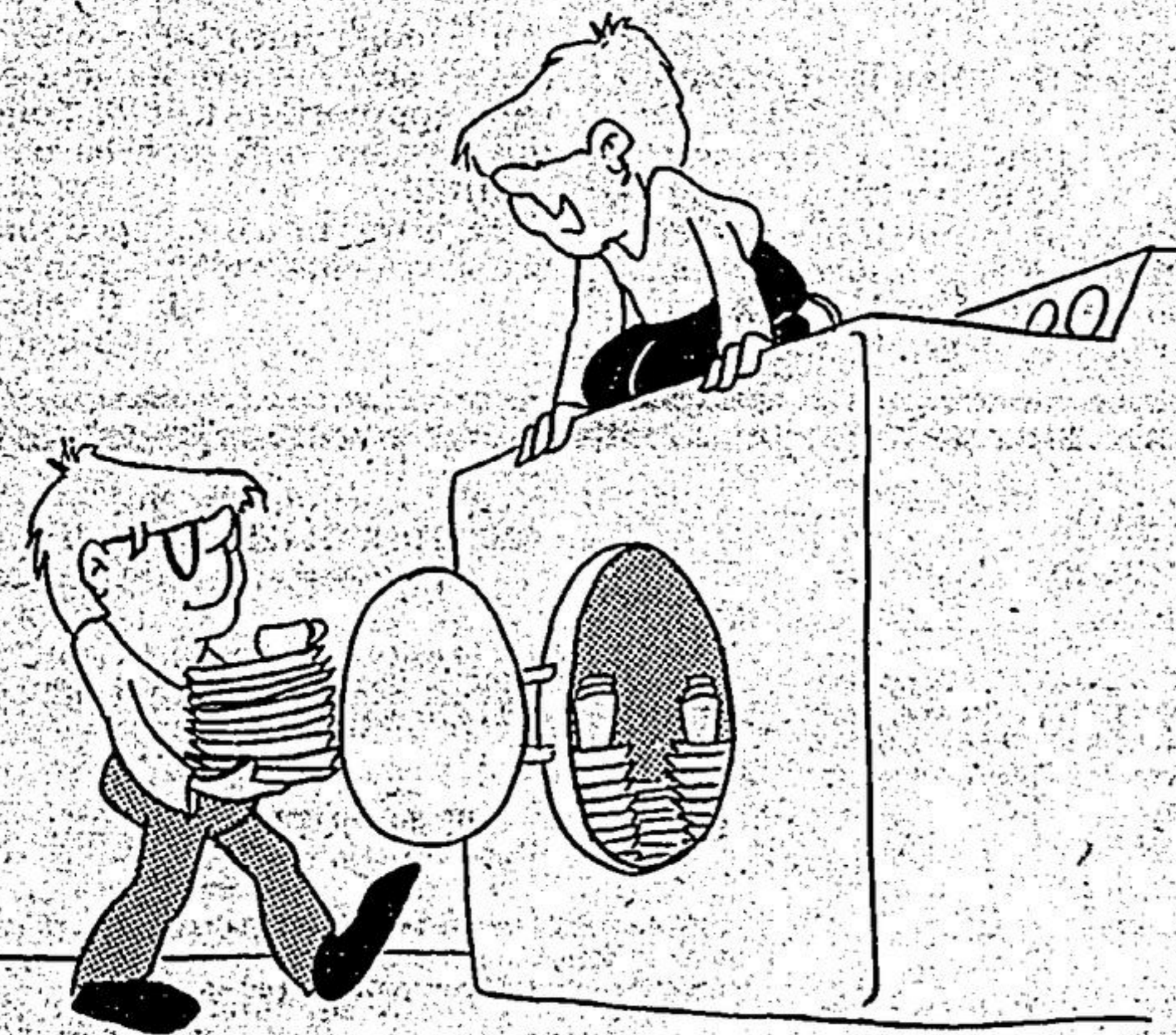
The provincial government will pay 85 per cent of the cost for new wells if road salt is not the cause of contamination. But this also represents a financial burden on the homeowner.

Last fall, the Ministry of the Environment drilled a test well 420-foot deep on the Powell property. It cost about \$24,000.

This newest well is not yet hooked up to the Powell home. Three other wells have been drilled to other depths in an effort to locate sufficient water.

The Steering Committee is expected to report its findings later this month.

## Ed and Claudette



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