

Household environmentalism dubbed a success

This week I committed the ultimate sacrifice for this column: I cleaned my house.

This was housecleaning with a noble experimental purpose, however, for I was testing out some alternative, environmentally benign solutions as suggested by Greenpeace and the "Household Hazardous Waste Wheel" supplied by Durham Region.

Anyway, apart from confusing the heck out of my husband, who awoke from an after-dinner snooze and thought he had changed addresses (so dazzled was he by the gleaming surfaces), I would have to say the experiment was a success.

I would now like to share some of these discoveries and recipes as well as the reasons why it is important to seek out alternatives.

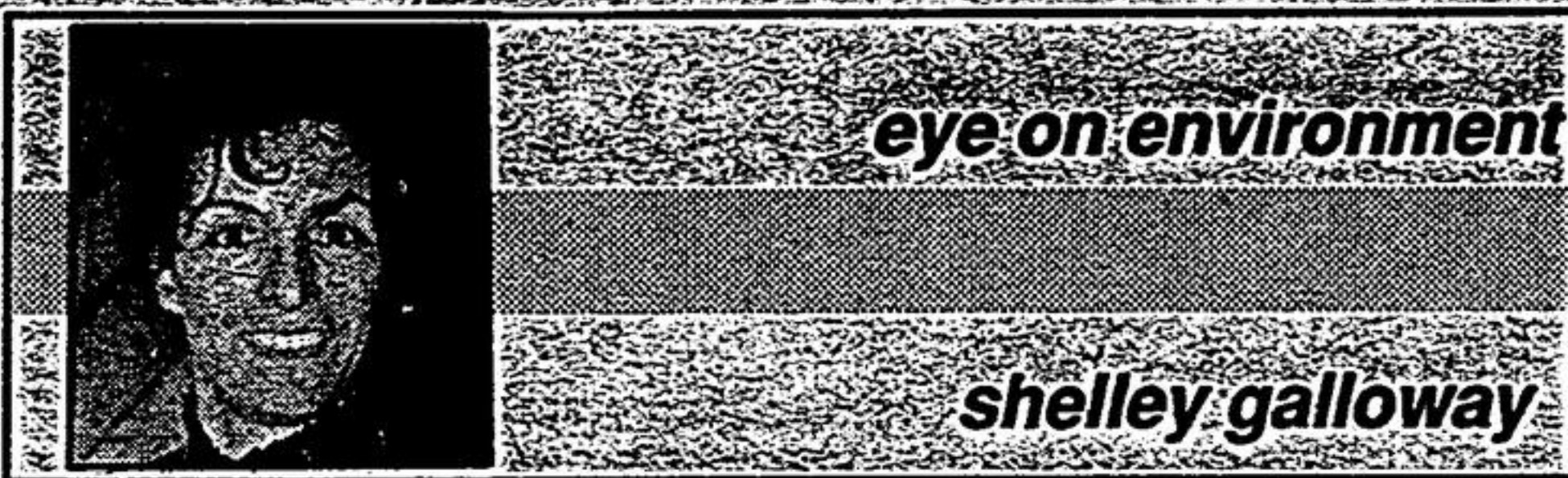
Take floor and furniture as examples.

They contain a combination of diethylene glycol, petroleum distillates and nitrobenzene.

These are highly flammable and toxic materials.

The alternative polish is one part lemon juice with two parts olive or vegetable oil. Shake and pour directly on the surface you wish to clean or onto the cloth.

It does take more than one swipe to achieve a nice gloss but it isn't hard work at all. This is a wonderful polish which makes you wonder how we came to be so dependent upon manufactured products in the



eye on environment

shelley galloway

first place.

Other extremely toxic compounds often found in the home are drain cleaners.

They contain sodium or potassium hydroxide, sodium hypochlorite, hydrochloric acid and petroleum distillates.

You may recall from high school chemistry that a fundamental rule was never to add a strong acid to a strong base for the rapid reaction can cause an explosion.

This is exactly how a drain cleaner works.

The crystals you carefully spoon into your drain contain both acidic and basic material so when you add water the rapid reaction between acids and bases causes all the bubbling and smoke.

It's very toxic and very dangerous around children.

The alternative, by contrast, is child's play.

All you need is a plunger, some boiling water, a quarter cup of baking soda and two ounces of white vinegar. An appreciative audience is optional.

First, try and loosen the clog with boiling water, then place the baking

soda as far down into the drain as you can.

Add the vinegar and, as the bubbling occurs, use the plunger to encourage the reaction to work further down the drain. More boiling water and plunging will help move the baking soda along and clear the last of the clog away.

A really clogged drain may need more than one application.

I now secretly look forward to clogged drains because they are so much fun.

A good preventative strategy for keeping your drains free is to never pour fat or grease down them and always use the drain sieve.

There are several recipes for alternative all-purpose cleaning.

One suggests using a half-cup of borax in four litres of hot water. Another suggests using a quarter cup of ammonia and a quarter cup of vinegar and one tablespoon of baking soda in four litres of hot water.

Still another lists a quarter cup of biodegradable soap and a quarter cup of vinegar in the four litres of hot water.

I favor the last of these for it is

effective and the vinegar leaves a pleasant and fresh scent. Incidentally, vinegar in hot water also makes an effective window cleaner.

Ammonia, although biodegradable, is a toxic compound and needs special care in handling. It is also not readily available (some hardware stores carry it) and worst of all, it stinks.

Baking soda is a little gem of a cleaning aid, I've discovered.

For those who have hard water, which can be a problem for laundry, one half cup of baking soda in the wash will help less laundry soap do the job. White vinegar or borax will also help.

A paste made of baking soda and water makes a great scrubbing agent for counters and sinks in kitchens and bathrooms.

Baking soda sprinkled on rugs, left for one hour and then vacuumed, will help to remove odors. For tougher rug cleaning, mix two parts cornmeal with one part borax, sprinkle liberally, and leave for an hour before vacuuming.

There you have it. In a nutshell, stock up on baking soda, white vinegar and borax and not only will all your cleaning needs be met, but you'll save money too.

Now that's environmentalism I can really get excited about.

Ballinger's Briefing

Balanced budget comes as welcome relief for Peterson's government

BILL BALLINGER
Durham-York MPP

The Ontario government, which had projected a budget deficit of \$577 million this fiscal year, has eliminated its deficit entirely and will enter fiscal year 1990-91 with a balanced budget, Ontario Treasurer Robert Nixon announced at Queen's Park recently.

He told a news conference that it was the first time in 20 years that Ontario had produced a balanced budget.

The treasurer, who will present his next budget this spring, said the government had faced a deficit of \$2.6 billion when it was elected in 1985 and began its "pay as you go" policy of fiscal management.

Provincial revenues will be \$952 million higher than anticipated, he said, with \$370 million of this total already having been reported in January in the third quarter Ontario Finances.

More than 90 per cent of the total increase relates to unanticipated Ontario personal income tax revenues.

Since our election in September, 1987 the government has put firm funding into priority areas such as health care, education, environment, transportation and social programs, and now the opportunity has arisen for us to close our books for this fiscal year with no deficit and a moderate surplus.

In pursuing its social programs along side its deficit reduction policy, the government has also had to grapple with three cutbacks in federal support for post-secondary education and health care through the Established Programs Financing arrangement in recent years.

Cuts in federal transfers have been one of the major reasons Ontario has had to raise additional tax revenues in recent years, Mr. Nixon said.

From a 1979-80 high of 52 per cent, federal support for Ontario's health care and post-secondary education has slipped to 38 per cent. These cuts have cost Ontario \$1.2 billion in this fiscal year alone and will account for a further \$1.6 billion in lost revenue in

1990-91.

Tax increases are never popular but they have allowed us to pay the bills.

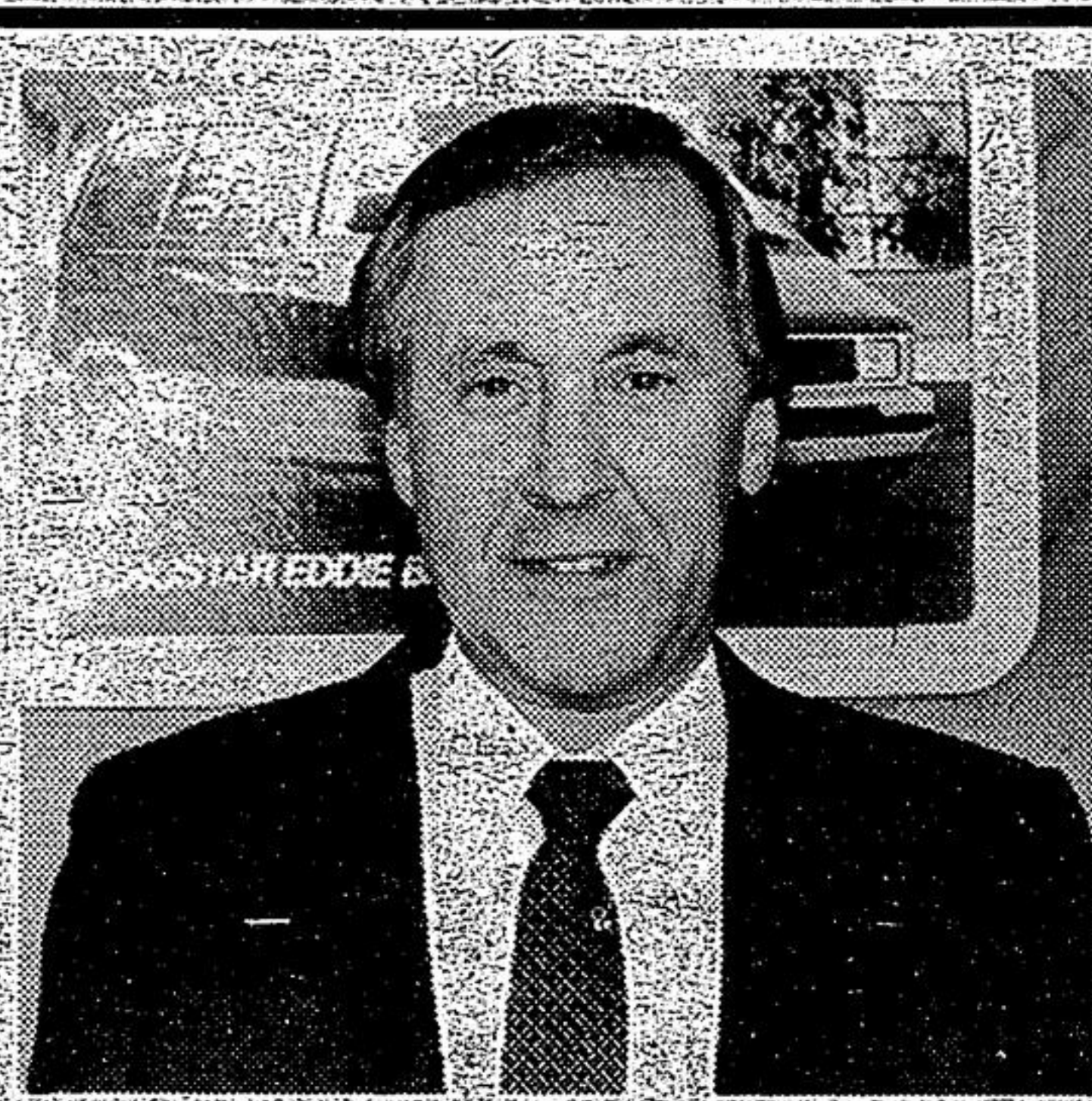
At the same time, we have been able to bolster the programs our citizens need.

As examples, since 1984-85, government support for health care expenditures has increased by \$5.6 billion, or 67 per cent, more than 30,000 affordable housing units are being provided through the Homes Now program, a \$2 billion Transportation Capital Program was introduced, and expenditures for the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been upped by 95 per cent.

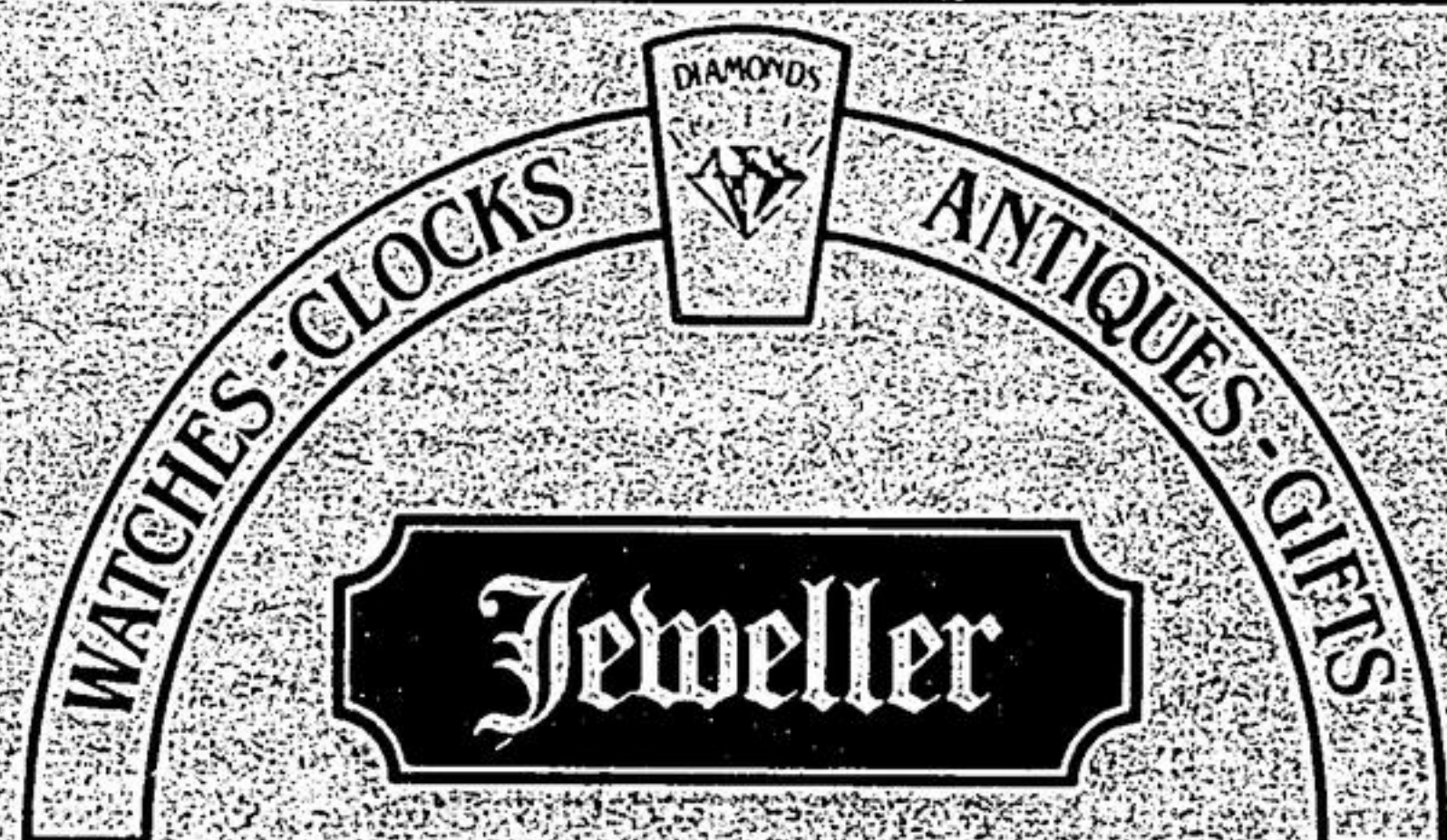
In fact, 33 cent out of every revenue dollar in Ontario goes toward health care.

By contrast, the federal government spends 35 cents of every dollar it collects just to pay for the cost of the federal deficit.

I was in attendance at opening ceremonies of the Provincial School Curling Championships which had eight schools from our riding participating with York Regional Board of Education Chairman Harry Bowes, who threw the first rock.



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Night of railroad nostalgia planned at for March 29

Local residents are invited to a night of railroading nostalgia and speculation of the future at an event organized by the York-Durham Heritage Railway Association.

The event, called 'Stouffville and the Railway: The Past, The Present and The Future', will include guest speakers Charles Cooper, author of *Narrow Gauge For Us*; Larry Murphy of the Victoria County Heritage Railway Association and Dermot Gilderdale of the York-Durham association.

It takes place Thursday, March 29 at 7 p.m. in the Latham Gallery and Stouffville Library.

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