

stuffville comment

Ratepayers footing bill for illegal trash

Illegal dumping in rural Whitchurch-Stouffville is getting out of hand.

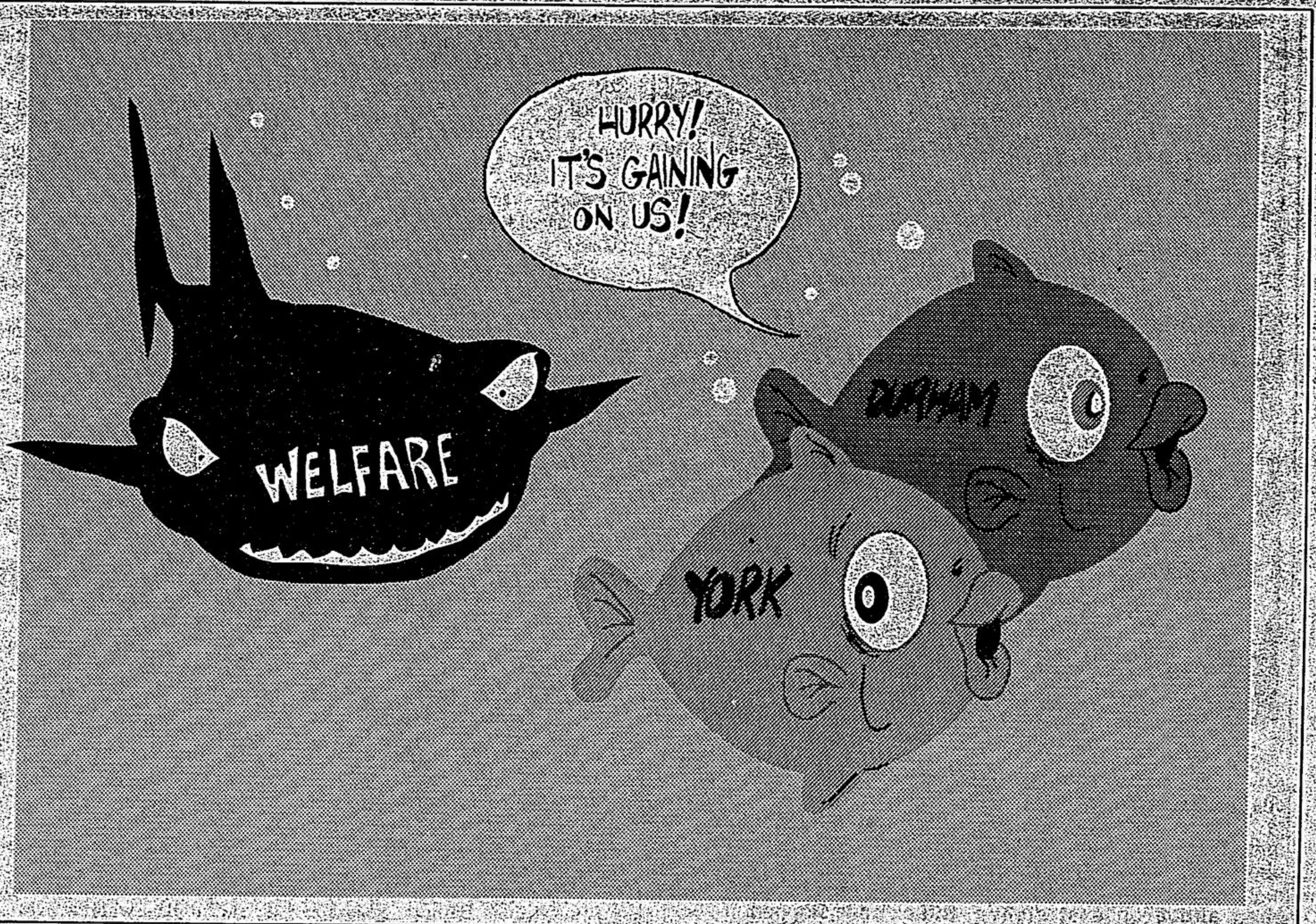
Town officials say trucks are unloading building materials, brush and other foreign matter onto the sides of roads nearly every weekend.

This is an underhanded and dishonest way for companies to escape costs and inconvenience of driving their unwanted loads to nearby landfill or recycling facilities.

But taxpayers should not have to foot the bill, while these company owners are making profits.

It takes an entire day for various town staff to investigate, load the material onto a truck and have the cargo properly transported to a facility. This is all at the cost of ratepayers.

It is time to band together in the name of the environment and put a stop to these garbage pirates. Our roads are being turned into garbage depots - at the expense of each and every one of us.



Students share 'touching' thoughts on Canada

This week I would like to share some correspondence I received from students in my riding of Durham-York. In response to an invitation some students from Brock High School in Cannington shared their thoughts with me concerning Ontario's role in Confederation.

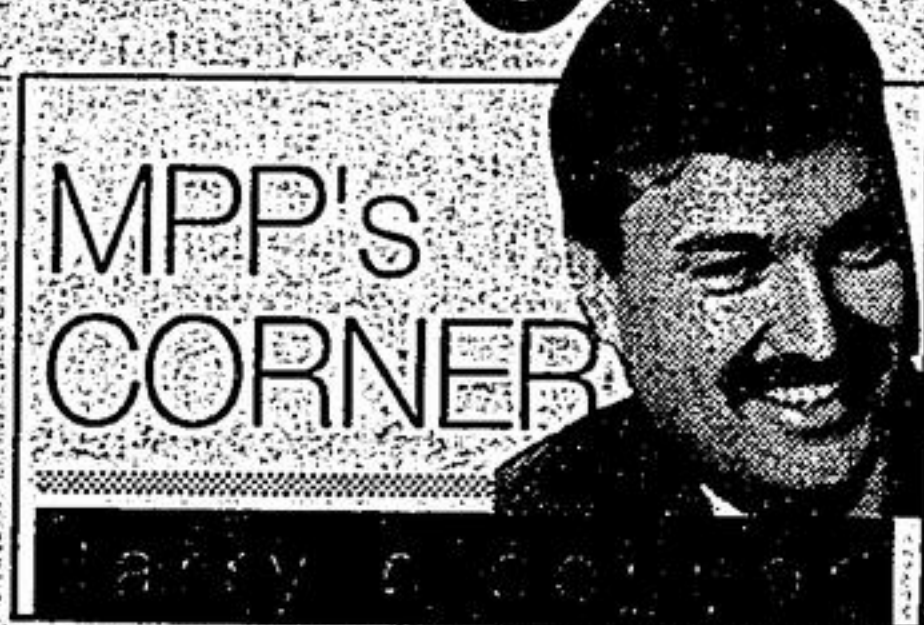
I received more than 70 letters from students whose ages ranged from 12-16 years.

These students using our government's public discussion paper Changing For The Better "An Invitation To Talk About Canada," focused their letters on the question "What Are The Values We Share As Canadians?"

They also addressed issues such as the recession, the language issue, aboriginal rights and free trade.

One particularly thoughtful letter beings, "Dear Mr. O'Connor, Canada is a bilingual country... Our entire history is filled with these two completely different languages. There is no future without a past. I am proud to be Canadian; I am proud to live in a country that honors different cultures, customs and languages. Being in Parliament gives you and all other politicians in government the responsibility of convincing Quebec to keep faith with this country. We are strong but they are vital. Letting them go would be so utterly foolish it is not worth thinking about."

Another student answers the question "How do we achieve justice for Canada's Aboriginal people?" by stating "Forgive me if this sounds rude but just give it to them. The land and



everything that we have tried to take away from them was theirs in the first place. They are Canadians just as we are and deserve the same rights as we have."

On the issue of the environment comments range from "I feel that

Ontario wants a more decisive government that will take an obvious stand on issues of concern in today's world." to "Ontario should fight very hard to put regulations on companies to ensure that waste, toxic or not, is kept to the bare minimum."

Students feel that "Canadians are very proud to the medical assistance plan (OHIP) This is one of the greatest benefits one has living in Canada."

One student's letter says, "Don't cut spending on education and social programs."

The last two comments were particularly touching.

I would like to say that I hope a few hundred high school students are going to be heard and that we are going to make a difference in our country, that seems to be falling apart every time we turn around."

"I am proud to be Canadian but I am really starting to wonder what it will offer me. Why don't people wake up and realize it is not okay anymore. It is falling apart at a steady pace and a lot of people are scared to grow up."

For more information contact Margaret Koopmans at the Georgina constituency office at 1-800-263-7411 or 722-7212.

Ninja Turtles could learn from Star Trek crew

When my children were born, I vowed they would never be exposed to subversive pastimes like drinking Coke, eating junk food, watching mindless movies with tacky product tie-ins or playing with guns.

They would instead develop inquiring minds and a disdain for crass consumerism, and would choose Verdi over Vanilla Ice without a second's hesitation.

Comics, catalogues and cartoons were out, art galleries, museums and cultural events were in. But that was then, this is now. Last weekend, I took them to see Ninja Turtles II.

First we had lunch. The children chose burgers and fries, drenched in ketchup and washed down with Sprite, and a chocolate bar to munch during the movie, which featured the most graphic and repellent footage of pizza consumption in the history of the silver screen: It was enough to put you off pepperoni and double cheese for life.

The paper-thin plot had the turtles hurling themselves at their opponents, legs akimbo.

You didn't actually see nasty stuff like blood, broken bones or even the connecting blow, which was suggested by a series of grunts and groans off-



camera. Presumably the producers could then argue that there was no gratuitous violence for impressionable kids to emulate.

This ploy puts me in mind of beer commercials, in which good ole boys do everything to plug the product except drink it, thus allowing government watchdogs to rest easy in the knowledge that they're not encouraging actual consumption. It does make you wonder though, why beer companies continue to advertise with such reckless abandon.

At the end of the movie, we returned to the cultural haven that is Chateau Gilderdale, where Malcolm immersed himself in comics bearing titles like The New Mutants and The Uncanny X-Men. His mind, I fear, was not being noticeably improved, but the past 12 years have convinced me that the consumption of a modicum of trash is an inevitable part of growing up.

Whenever I feel the urge to enrich my children's lives with the right stuff, I look back to my own misbegotten youth, when rock groups like The Rolling Stones and The Animals were my cultural heroes, and I spent a lot of time reading dippy love comics which would have been outlawed by any self-respecting feminist or culture-vulture.

Besides, I've found a sneaky way to painlessly cram a bit of real culture and learning into the bits of my son's brain that aren't already overflowing with baseball trivia, comic collections, the monotonous chants of rap and the complete and unabridged scripts of Star Trek: The Next Generation.

The egg-headed captain of the starship Enterprise is also the host of a new series on Channel 17, entitled Shape of the World, which is an educational program on the history and culture of the human race. And my son loves it! Of course, if Patrick Stewart narrated a piece on the composition of earwax, he'd probably love that too, but that's beside the point.

Suddenly my son's brain is boldly going where it had never dreamt of going before. Now if the Ninja Turtles would just like to consider hosting a series on the history of art...

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