

Comment

Golden report is bad for business

Is it fair to reduce the taxes of Metro Toronto business people by piling on the balance sheets of GTA businesses?

No, it isn't, but that's what would happen in the event the Golden report is implemented.

Small businesses, the engines that drive a town like ours, will be silenced if they are forced to pay more taxes through so-called education and services pooling as proposed in the GTA reform plan.

Businesses in Whitchurch-Stouffville will be forced to pay up to 80 per cent more (based on a \$1 million assessment) in the initial impact phase if the plan is put into place.

Uxbridge merchants will not be expected to cough up that much, but can expect up to \$104 a year more, an amount few business people can afford.

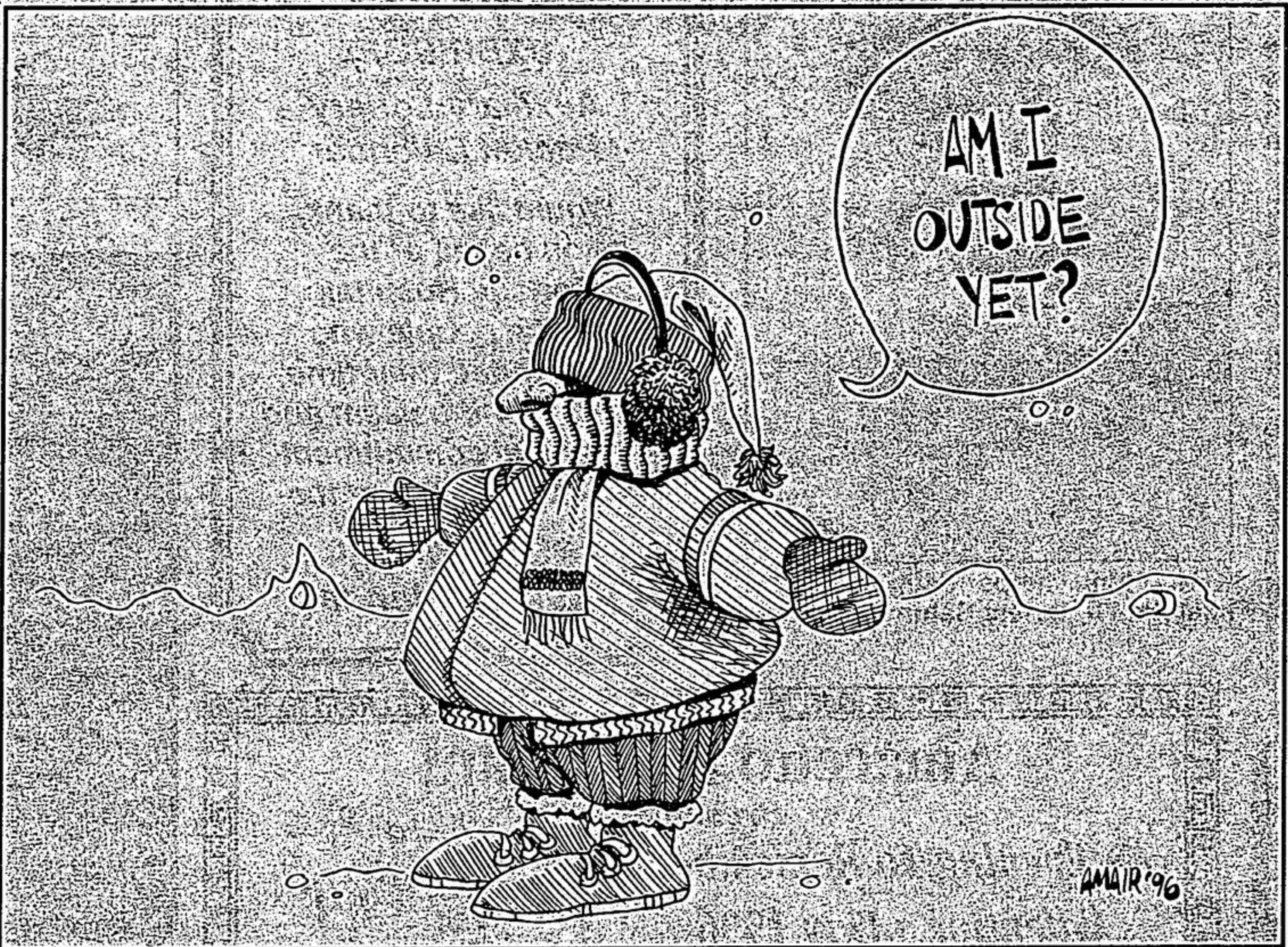
All of this will raise Durham Region's contribution to the pool by \$40 million, and York Region's by a whopping \$170 million from residential, commercial and industrial taxes. This will, in turn, help reduce Metro Toronto's tax bill by

\$452 million. The question remains: Why would someone locate their business on Main St. when Anne Golden has made it

so profitable to locate on Yonge St.?

Businesses will be crushed all across the GTA should this pooling

of taxes go through. Jobs will be lost and our downtowns will dry up. Tell our MPP the Golden report is bad for business.



Surfing the 'Net is all wet if you ask me

Technology sucks. I have come to that conclusion, not in the last day or so, but ever since I discovered that those buttons you push to get a 'Walk' signal are really not attached to anything.

I have had many bad experiences with technology, not the least of which involve bombing computers, failing floppies and crappy cars.

The computer, though, seems to give me no end of grief. When I was 16, I signed up for a computer course at school. This was in the days of cassette tapes recording the programs you wrote to have the computer add two and two. I got it wrong, and wound up with 17 per cent for a grade in the course.

My experiences with the machine of the future have been none too pleasant ever since. And they're not getting any better.

Last week, I took the ramp onto the information superhighway for the first time.

I was sorely disappointed. It was more like being on the Don Valley Parkway on a Friday afternoon: overcrowded, full of loonies and a grandiose waste of time. The Internet, it turns out has plenty of information, but who wants it?

I called up an entertainment menu and began surfing. I came across the A list, and at random and for no particular reason (honestly), clicked on the Jennifer Aniston Homepage. It turns out 128,381 people have checked into this page since



December 5, putting it into the top five per cent of all homepages on the web. Why?

You get pictures of the tousled

hair star of Friends, culled directly from magazines and a few bio-facts. There is also a segment of the TV show you can call up. That is, if you don't mind waiting 49 minutes for a two-minute snippet to download on your computer.

I checked out some more serious sites, but found I could get the information a whole lot faster and without all the gobbley-gook by walking to the

library. It seems the Net is only good for looking at naked pictures of Brad Pitt (I didn't, but I've been told), chatting with other people who are bored enough with real human interaction to spend their days e-mailing back and forth and users who consider it a step toward immortality to create their own homepage.

I only surfed for about half an hour, but it took me almost that

long to get on the stupid thing.

No, technology has let me down again. I can't say I know what I was expecting, and I should give the Net creators the benefit of the doubt that things will get better, faster, and that it may eventually prove beneficial to our lives; but right now, it's like I'm back in Grade 11 Computers. It's frustrating, boring and for the most part, I couldn't care less.

Democracy not perfect at the Chateau

When I first saw a couple of professional hockey players duking it out on the ice, I was shocked and appalled.

Coming from the land of cucumber sandwiches and cricket, a soporific game which requires considerable force of will on the part of the audience to stay awake, I found hockey somewhat swift and brutal for my frightfully sporting British sense of fair play.

I was reflecting on this rather naive attitude in my role as an observer at a recent meeting. The participants were engaged in heated discussions on what was clearly a contentious topic. Everyone was frigidly polite to those whose views they found unpalatable, but there was an invigorating sense that, at any minute, the gloves would be off and an entertaining m el e would ensue.

Far be it from me to recommend fisticuffs as an appropriate way of settling disputes,

but the wheels of democracy do sometimes move in a maddeningly turgid manner and the end result is all too often a compromise which, though it satisfies no one, takes a month of Sundays to accomplish.

Democracy, in other words, makes you late for dinner or a t ete-a-t ete at the pub. It requires reasoned argument, a pleasant attitude to the idiot who disagrees with you, and a whole raft of rules and regulations which enshrine scrupulous fairness and a voice for all, even those you may think don't deserve it.

A couple of hours of unrelieved democracy can transform an otherwise balanced person into a maniac. It can make a mild-mannered parent a tyrant and render the most careful driver a tail-gating lunatic.

Chateau Gilderdale, for instance, is run along more or less democratic lines, a fact,



which owes a greater debt to laziness on the part of the matriarchal parent than to any noble aspirations towards justice for all.

One of the haphazardly-applied rules is that whoever makes a mess cleans it up, which accounts for the generally unappetizing state of the basement. This laissez-faire attitude is sometimes abandoned for an abrupt rescinding of democracy in favor of the kind of boot-camp regime which has my offspring's fingers walking through the lawyers' section of the Yellow Pages.

Democracy also results in the bedroom from hell. "These are

your rooms," I told my children, democratically, about three years ago. "If you want to live in an appalling mess, it's up to you. Just don't expect me to clean it up."

This is a particularly good example of democracy not working, or working only in favor of the young and the slapdash. My fond conviction that eventually my children would get tired of the chaos has so far proved sadly inaccurate.

While I am generally capable of turning a blind eye to the middle, Mr. Wallethead is less able to accommodate the rest of the family's disorderly habits, although we are gradually wearing him down.

Democracy is by no means perfect, but no one has yet come up with anything better. In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few."

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