

# Comment

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## McGuinty has his work cut out for him

Dalton McGuinty. Our next premier? We can't be certain, of course, but by all indications, the Liberals in Ontario have a long way to travel before they will be able to put their new man in office at Queen's Park.

McGuinty, the Ottawa lawyer chosen in a marathon, five-ballot battle with parachute Golden Boy Gerard Kennedy by provincial Liberals as the wrench in the Mike Harris machine, has his work cut out for him.

Since no one has heard of him before, this makes his task doubly hard.

As well, as one wag put it after the election, "If this convention is any indication, then the Liberals couldn't organize a one-car funeral."

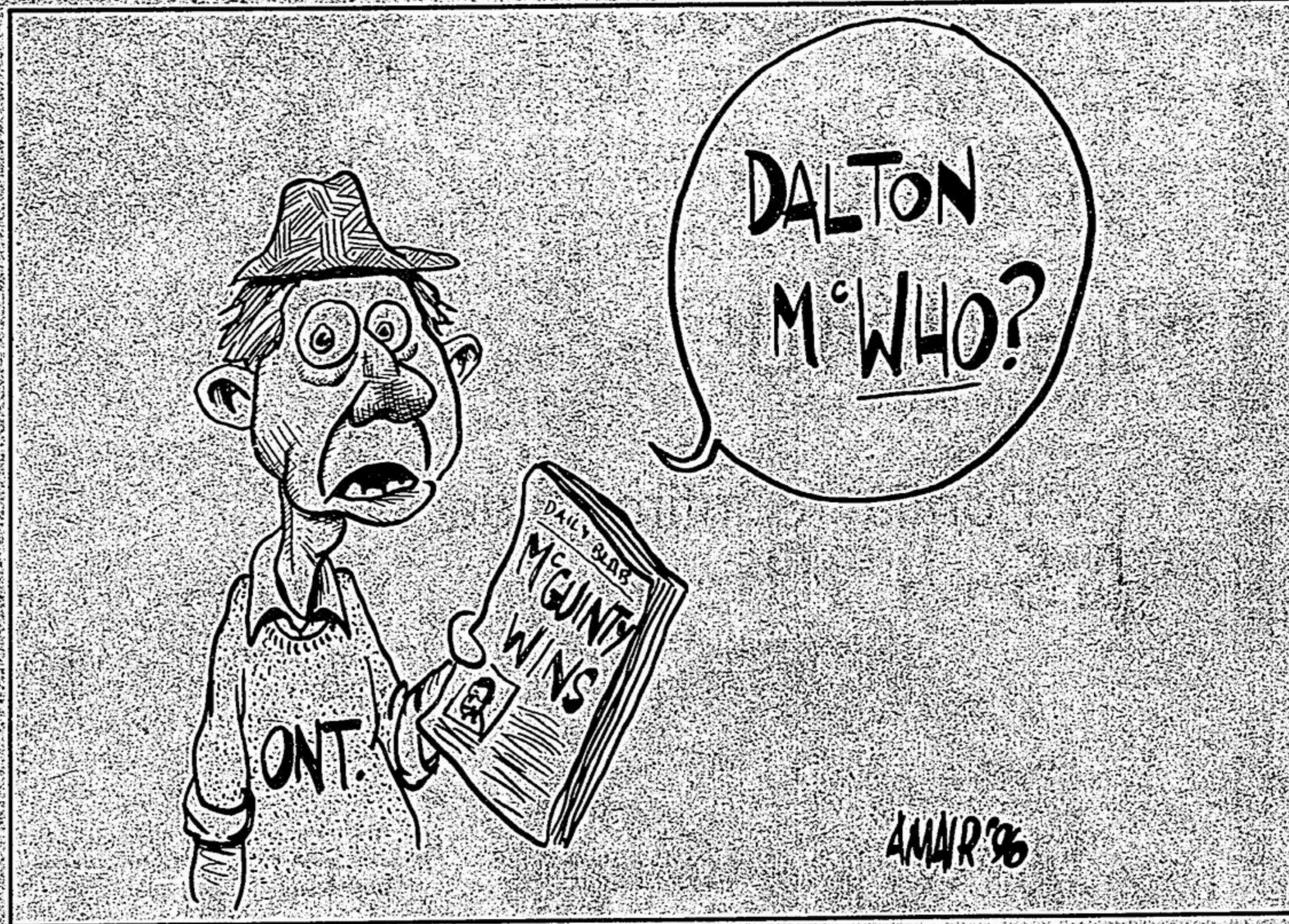
Organization is one problem, but party unity is another. The convention was anything but cordial. The provincial Liberals are divided, several times over. It is McGuinty's first task, he says, to unite the party.

Then he has to find a profile. Through the backroom maneuverings that so often characterize Canadian leadership conventions, McGuinty was able to sneak past Kennedy by 140 votes.

He was one of a half-dozen anonymous candidates who entered the

race, only to be faced with the apparent coronation of Kennedy. The Liberals have rejected the obvious party darling for a virtual unknown. He's

going to have to work fast and hard if he expects to make up any ground at all on Harris by the time the next election rolls around.



## Get 'em while they're hot - Stripper mutant dolls

It's December, and therefore, the immutable laws of nature dictate that there be a Toyland crisis.

Yes, every year, somebody comes out with a list of really bad Christmas toys that are:

- a) guaranteed to impale your child before the wrapping is off,
- b) guaranteed to break before you leave the store parking lot,
- c) guaranteed to annoy the living hell out of any right-thinking person or,
- d) guaranteed to be left on the stairs while you're carrying the piano to the rec room.

Actually, this year, they seem to have a point. Quite literally.

There is a quaint line of action figures called Spawn. They are mutants which run around and make their creator stinking rich while fighting other mutants. It is your typical post-apocalyptic diseased mutant line of toys aimed at five-year-old boys.

Believe it or not, there is a Stripper Mutant in this charming toy line who disarms the other mutants just by walking into the room. I'm not kidding.

Now, another of these new action figures is a woman, named Xena, based on the TV series of the same name. Huzzah for equal rights among mutants. But what an action figure she cuts! Remove the breast plate of your very own Valkyrie, and there she is for all the mutant world to ogle. As I would say when I was five: "Freeshow, Seymour!" We're not talking Barbie here folks. It's all there in living plastic.

Now, don't get me wrong, I



hailed the infamous Joey doll back in the All in the Family days for its anatomical correctness. There was something lacking in GI Joe after all.

So, I don't necessarily have a

problem with the accurate rendering of the female form in play things. I think it fosters healthy sexual attitudes, something this country direly needs. But Holy Parton, Batman! This girl is most definitely not human. She makes Pamela-Lee look like... well, she's not really human either. But it's hardly a healthy depiction.

When I was a kid we had a choice of Dinky toys, Hot Wheels, GI Joe or Major Matt

Mason. Major Matt's sharp wire legs always used to stick through the rubber, we used to give each other Indian bellyburns with GI Joe's beard, and we used to whip each other silly with those orange Hot Wheel tracks. Dinky toys were made to step on in the middle of the night, especially the Batmobile.

We never had anything like the stuff kids have today.

No wonder this Spawn stuff is so popular. We would have tied

our eye-teeth to a door-knob for a toy like that when I was a kid.

We used to hide the Eaton's catalogue under the couch so we could catch a surreptitious glance at the sweater page. We would have fainted dead away if we had known about the bra section!

I can just see all those smiling faces this Christmas morning and those tiny children's voices exclaiming, "Can I have my Spawn back now Dad?"

## Relax if you want to survive Christmas

It's Dec. 1 and already the opening strains of Ding Dong Merrily On High make me want to lob a brick at the nearest speaker.

It's not so much the tune I mind, it's the context. I am stuck at a massive mall, where I've arranged to meet my daughter in order to drive her to the calmer, gentler environs of Chateau Gilderdale. With three-quarters of an hour to kill, I start threading my way through the mob of eager shoppers, many dragging screaming children in their wake, and stagger into the nearest store to recharge my batteries.

Here, as everywhere in the mall, the thermostat is set at 38 degrees Celsius. Something that sounds suspiciously like a country version of Hark The Herald Angels Sing is emanating from four corners of the room in a spasmodically successful effort to drown out next door's jarring Jingle Bells.

Because I always shop for presents at the eleventh hour, I am staggered by the number of people who are already engrossed in the task.

Clothing stores are overflowing with women who want to dress appropriately for what marketing executives insist on calling the holiday season, a description that should be banned as blatantly misleading advertising. Just ask anyone whose job it is to send cards, buy and wrap presents, stuff and cook a turkey and still manage to wish everyone a Merry Dec. 25, albeit through clenched teeth, if this is her idea of a holiday.

We used to celebrate Christmas—now we're given endless advice on how to survive it. Almost every magazine and newspaper contains lists of things to do to make your "holiday season" less stressful. Be warned, however, that reading some of these Martha Stewart



type homilies can cause a severe attack of the vapors.

Many helpful hints columns begin with the assumption that you are reading the article in time to make an early start on preparations. Start early, in fact, is usually the number one piece of advice and it is this which renders the rest of the suggestions obsolete in the case of yours truly.

Further down the list you will find ideas to save you money - for example, Why not make your gifts, instead of buying them? Or worse, a whole article devoted to creating your own gift wrap. Ho, ho, ho. A typically upbeat advice column, culled from a prehis-

toric Canadian Living I found in the basement, is cheerfully entitled, Christmas - What a Mess! "If you happen to have more time than common sense and decide to paint the bedroom at this time of year, wrote the infuriatingly perky author, who is probably an alien from another planet, "decorate it with cool blues or violets, monochromatic color schemes and neutrals to lower your blood pressure and quiet overactivity."

I would put this a little differently. If you decide to paint the bedroom at this time of year, you're in serious need of professional help.

And since Christmas will arrive whether you're ready or not, relax, ignore those annoying lists and take a tip from 16th century writer Thomas Tusser. "At Christmas play and make good cheer/For Christmas comes but once a year."

## Stouffville Tribune

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