

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Amalgamation the only option in York

The latest salvo in the battle over who will rule the Greater Toronto Area comes from the City of Burlington.

In its White Paper on Governance, Burlington recommends Halton Region be turned into a co-operative service board with no political status and no ability to levy taxes.

Not surprisingly, some local politicians are eying the report to see if it can be adapted to York Region.

After all, the political landscape in the Toronto area is changing dramatically, with the creation of a Toronto mega-city, the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board and the downloading of provincial responsibilities, such as transit and social services, to municipal governments.

Smart politicians can see the status quo isn't going to work and are studying ways to change the map to their own advantage, rather than having reorganizations imposed on them by the provincial government.

Burlington's plan eliminates regional governments and gives more power to cities and towns. Over time, individual municipalities would assume as many as possible of the responsibilities now handled by the regions.

The rest would be handled by a small co-operative services board, made up of politicians and senior administrators from each town. The board would be responsible for administering programs, rather than setting policies and charging taxes.

Burlington's report argues this would reduce red tape and confusion for residents, who could call their town hall about all municipal services.

Burlington's plan would be more workable in Halton, which has only four municipalities, than in York Region, where the co-operative services board would have to co-ordinate the needs of nine diverse municipalities.

It's also more advantageous to a municipality such as Burlington, which is relatively large, urbanized and has a well-established infrastructure.

It might also work well for Markham, Vaughan or Richmond Hill.

But smaller towns such as Whitchurch-Stouffville and East Gwillimbury would be left in the lurch. With small populations, little industrial assessment and little infrastructure, residents in these towns can expect a declining standard of service without a regional presence.

Nor could they expect a significant voice on the Greater Toronto Services Board, where their single vote each will be overshadowed by Toronto and other large municipalities.

In fact, that's where Burlington's whole theory breaks down.

Six municipalities — four of which were very large by Canadian standards — were combined to form the Toronto mega-city. Yet Burlington is arguing that it can, for the most part, stand on its own.

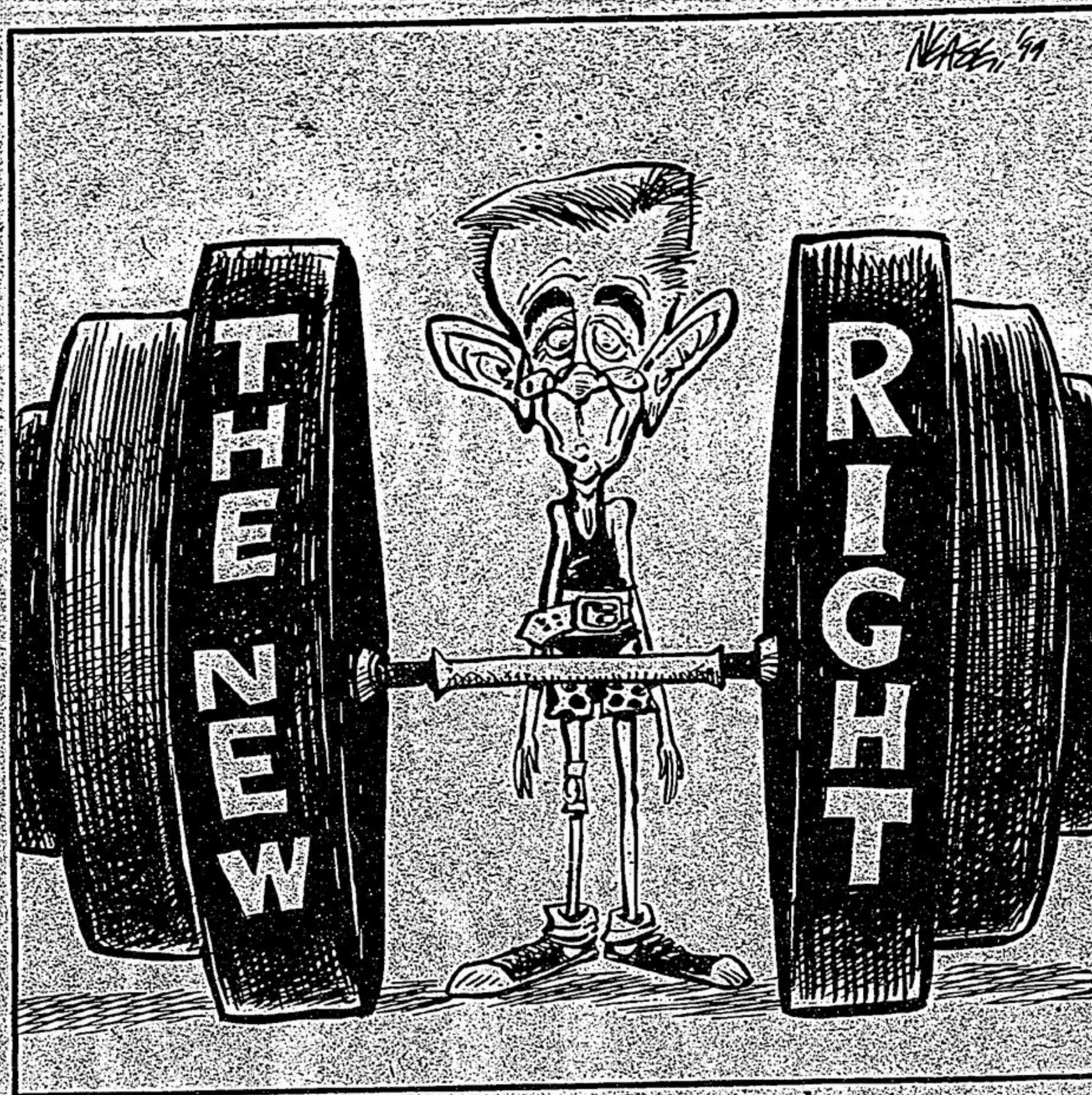
The report never pretends that its strategy can be applied across the entire GTA. Indeed, the entire thrust of the report is that each community has to find its own solution.

In York Region, it makes no sense to maintain nine municipalities, five of which are small by GTA standards, without a regional federation.

Amalgamation remains the best strategy in this region. Perhaps, if York's map was redrawn to create three or four large cities, the co-operative services board scheme might be practical.

But, in reality, eliminating the lowest tier of government to create one large city-region would give us the most clout within the GTA.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Soaring costs no surprise

Ballantrae fire hall costs double? Small wonder.

Rarely a project financed by the public purse is finished in the vicinity of the original estimate.

Will the real cost of the proposed pool complex be around \$15 million, plus the operating expenses, a full million each year? Tighten your belts, folks.

A. ZAKIS
STOUFFVILLE

Tribune prose from 1892

This is an amazing comment on municipal affairs. Full credit belongs to *The Tribune* from Dec. 2, 1892.

This may sound a bit familiar: *Time is swiftly passing as yet little or nothing is heard in reference to municipal matters. It is time "the pot" was boiling. It is folly to delay until nomination day and then put up a man totally unfit for any office. Let the citizens now busy themselves about their representatives for (Sept. 2000).*

We make no mention of our present council, let their deeds speak for them. This would impress upon the ratepayers that now is the time to consider these things: not on nomination day, and let not false modesty keep anyone in the background.

There are plenty of men in town who would make good members in whatever capacity they might be placed, and, we trust, if solicited they will give the matter their most serious consideration. Let us now allow ourselves to imagine that there are only half a dozen persons who

are capable or qualified to fill the office. There are plenty of men good and true.

Let us throw aside all "petty differences" and see if we can't get some men to enter the field — not that those who served us in the past have not performed the arduous duties of their office faithfully and well — but did it ever dawn upon you fellow ratepayer, that the honours we so "reluctantly" confer upon these gentlemen are in reality 12 months of gratuitous labour in disguise, with a superabundance of "thanks" in the form of abuse thrown in, and that some of these veterans would gladly step aside and see others "man the ship of state" of (2000). But are there not other reasons why we should try to get some new men to fill these positions — particularly the office of (mayor)?

These old "war horses" are perhaps, not only weary of long service, but are liable to be removed from our midst, or get into positions which call them away so that they cannot attend to the duties of the office and we want others to have some experience in these matters. What say the ratepayers about elevating one of our present councillors? Let there be some ripples on the municipal sea at once.

FRED ROBBINS
STOUFFVILLE

President says thanks

I would like to extend sincere thanks to everyone involved in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce Winterfest '99.

RUTHE BOYNTON
PRESIDENT



Doug Devine

A vote for the past is a vote for McGuinty

Anyone puzzled by Mike Harris' latest surge in the polls should take a closer look at the increased exposure Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty is getting.

Last week, the newspapers and TV screens were filled with pictures of McGuinty vowing to hire back all the nurses Harris has fired — illustrated by a cardboard arrow, which he was only too eager to spin for the cameras, seemingly oblivious to how silly he looked.

This week, McGuinty was back in front of the cameras vowing to reopen hospitals that Harris has closed across the province.

TRUST HIM, PLEASE

When pressed for details, the suddenly evasive McGuinty admitted he didn't mean he would reopen all 30 hospitals facing closures, nor could he even name one right now.

But trust him, hospitals will be saved if people just elect him instead of Harris — honest.

This sounds alarmingly similar to the Liberals' great "Scrap the GST" promise of 1993, which became the "Replace the GST" promise of 1994, then the "We changed the GST, can't you tell" whine of 1995.

Perhaps that's because, just as Jean Chretien knew there was no way he could scrap the GST, McGuinty knows it would be foolhardy to reopen surplus hospitals closed by Harris.

Indeed, few politicians or health-care officials disagree with the basic premise that we've been spending way too much on hospitals and we need to move as many services as we can into less-expensive facilities, as well as providing more community support services.

PROMISES, PROMISES

The real reason our hospitals have been struggling to cope is because Harris closed hospitals before the replacement services were in place.

But Harris knows those services will be in place within a year or two. He also knows that, when the short-term pains subside, our health-care system will be more efficient and cost-effective than it has ever been.

McGuinty knows that, too, but he believes the only way he'll get elected is to promise to reverse as many Harris changes as he can. Which should be just enough ammunition for Harris to win in a landslide.

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