

# Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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## EDITORIAL

### Government's timing on 407 was perfect

Say what you will about the provincial government, Premier Mike Harris and his cabinet ministers have perfect timing.

Take last week's announcements concerning Hwy 407. On Tuesday, Privatization Minister Rob Sampson was joined by Transportation Minister Tony Clement and others to accept a cheque for \$3.1 billion on behalf of Ontario taxpayers.

A private consortium of Spanish construction giant Grupo Ferrovial and its subsidiary Cintra Concessions de Infraestructuras de Transporte as majority shareholder, and Quebec's SNC-Lavalin minority shareholder, teamed up to purchase the toll highway.

As part of the purchase, the consortium promised to start construction on the eastern extension to Brock Road in Pickering as soon as possible.

For the privilege of handing Ontario taxpayers such a gigantic cheque, the consortium was given permission to charge tolls on the 407 for the next 99 years, if it so desired.

Three days later, Sampson held another press conference to announce the new owners also had free reign to open interchanges where and when they wanted along the 407.

The government's timing is perfect because it handed over the highway, and the controversial decisions that must be made concerning its extension and new interchanges, just in time for the upcoming provincial election.

The Tories were going to have to make some tough, and in some cases very unpopular, decisions as the 407 headed east. Now, however, the government has washed its hands of the highway.

The problem now belongs to private industry. And it is going to be a lot harder lobbying this company owned by Spanish and Quebec business people, than it was the provincial government.

Not surprisingly, merchants on Main Street, Markham are especially concerned about the possibility of the Hwy 48 interchange opening in the near future. Those merchants, local politicians, and other residents were able to convince Markham MPP and cabinet minister, Dave Tsubouchi to persuade his provincial government colleagues to end the highway at McCowan Road.

But as Markham Mayor Don Cousens pointed out on Friday, the desire to not open the Hwy 48 interchange was far from unanimous. He admitted his council was split on the issue.

The other huge concern expressed by 407 foes was the development it would spawn along its eastern extension. Governments have to worry about those kinds of complaints, but private companies certainly do not.

It will be interesting to see the reaction of the 407's new owners as they have to deal with the many concerns surrounding the highway. They can try to listen and work with those who are worried about the 407 and its impact. But they don't have to.

After all, Grupo Ferrovial and SNC-Lavalin aren't up for re-election this year.

## CHEERS & JEERS

**CHEERS:** To three York Region senior citizens honoured by Lieutenant Governor Hilary Weston recently, Margaret Bibby, Helene Johnson and Mavis McCallum received 1999 International Year of Older Persons Awards. The trio have been actively involved in both the Stouffville and Markham communities, proving yet again that our senior citizens are setting wonderful examples of volunteerism and hard work for all residents.

# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fly the flag proudly

On March 6, town council proclaimed June 1 through July 1 as Canada Flag Appreciation Month in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

In co-operation with this, Ian Mackenzie of Stouffville's Canadian Tire has agreed to acquire additional flags to meet all requirements.

It is my hope that everyone, including residents and merchants, will be prompted to fly a flag from their properties, not only during the month of June but all year.

We are indeed privileged to live in this wonderful country. Surely, the flying of our nation's flag is not too much to ask or expect.

JIM THOMAS  
STOUFFVILLE

### Politicians must do duty

It would seem to me that as far as the pool/library is concerned, no one wants it where the politicians want it.

Of course, not being born yesterday, politicians can put it wherever they decide. They are in power.

However, I think it's time they decide if they would like to stay in power the next time around.

Far be it from me to try to change their minds, but I ask them to make their own decision, not influenced by bureaucrats or developers.

We want an indoor pool, we want an expanded library. Do your duty to and for the majority.

GEORGE LOVETT  
STOUFFVILLE

### Democracy a joke

Re: Bombs hitting too close to home, March 27.

Only fanatics would have the audacity to deny, let alone justify, the barbaric crimes that are being committed by the Serbs in Kosovo and, before that, in Bosnia.

Instead of being ashamed of what the Serbian army and security forces are doing in Kosovo, Danny Milich has unabashedly tried to defend the genocidal activities of the serial ethnic cleanser, Slobodan Milosevic, who, in his insatiable appetite for power, has managed to bring the downfall and disintegration of Yugoslavia.

In this connection, and as a Canadian of Arab origin, I was, and still am, against the bombing of Iraqi cities and the UN sanctions against Iraq. However, I would never defend or justify the atrocities and criminal actions which have been carried out by Saddam Hussein, the president or, more accurately, the butcher of Iraq who is, incidentally but not surprisingly, a close ally of President Milosevic.

As a matter of fact, of the thousands of Canadians of Iraqi origin, I have yet to meet a single person who does not despise Saddam and pray for the day when Iraq is freed from the gripping evil power of that criminal of a president.

How unfortunate that Milich did not express the same feelings of revulsion towards Milosevic and his totalitarian regime.

On the contrary, he claimed that "Yugoslavia is a democracy." What a joke.

IBRAHIM HAYANI  
UNIONVILLE



Brenda Larson

## Amalgamation clock ticking for all to hear

Once the provincial election is called, the campaigning over and the votes cast, in all likelihood, we'll see another Tory government at Queen's Park.

This isn't intended to start a discussion about the province, about the election or about the quality of Tory governments.

It is intended to draw attention to a real deadline approaching York Region and its nine municipalities — once the provincial election is over, there's roughly 18 months to the next municipal election and I'm certain York Region's politicians are smart enough to understand what that means.

The province has made no bones about its wish to see regional municipalities streamlined, preferably before the next municipal election.

And the threat, hanging ever-present in the air, is that if the municipalities don't work it out, the province will draw the boundary lines where it wants them.

Instead of a reasonable approach to amalgamation, that should have seriously started three years ago, we'll see decisions made in panic.

That's why we're suddenly seeing Aurora forming a committee to review its prospective partners in amalgamation. As deputy mayor John West says, "... if we don't do something to join ourselves, we risk having it done for us."

If memory serves me, that's precisely what former Markham Regional Councillor Fred Cox, once the region's governance chairperson, preached over and over and over again, his pleas for regional co-operation falling on parochial ears. Now the mad rush begins and instead of a tidy, reasonable approach to amalgamation, one that should have seriously started three years ago, we'll see decisions made with a tinge of panic attached to them.

Nothing's really changed for the players in this boundary-drawing game. The big questions remain the same.

• How many municipalities do we carve York Region into?

• How do we restructure the region? Or do we just dump it?

• Once the new lines are drawn, how many representatives will be needed? What will each representative be responsible for?

The difference now is the clock is ticking, and everyone hears it.

## Stouffville Tribune

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