

# Stouffville Tribune

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## EDITORIAL

### Tories will do what they promised

Officially, the document released by the Mike Harris government Tuesday was a budget. In reality, it's an election platform.

With the election coming next month, this budget won't be passed into law by the current government.

But we can read it as a hard and fast statement of intent that the Tories will do what they have promised in their Blueprint campaign document.

The 5-per-cent income tax cut that is to take effect July 1 represents a commitment toward the promise of a further 20-per-cent reduction in income taxes the Tories have promised to phase in over the next five years.

Harris has also promised a 20-per-cent cut to the provincial portion of property taxes over the next term of office, as well as \$1 billion in cuts to commercial and industrial property taxes.

The provincial portion of property taxes is entirely dedicated to education and that portion is being cut by 10 per cent immediately, with the rest being phased in over five years.

But instead of cutting education spending, this budget adds \$100 million — balanced out by cuts to other ministries.

But none of this increase will be visible in neighbourhood schools. The budget devotes \$750 million to capital construction at colleges and universities, with the rest going into a research fund.

The Blueprint promises a preservation of overall education funding and increases in classroom spending to keep up with enrolment.

What that really means is more cuts in what the government deems to be non-classroom spending — and more fights with unions and administrators.

Health-care spending is up \$1.6 billion and residents have already had a taste of that increase, with a \$64-million grant for the expansion of York County Hospital.

In the long haul, the Blueprint promises a 20-per-cent increase in health spending over the next term, bringing it to \$22.7 billion by 2004.

Thanks to economic growth and the sale of Hwy 407, the province's deficit is lower than the anticipated \$3.6 billion.

In their election platform, the Tories are promising to cut that to \$2.1 billion this year and have a balanced budget by the end of the next term — as well as knocking \$2 billion off the provincial debt.

But for all of Harris' budget cutting, Ontario is still running a deficit — the only province other than British Columbia to do so. And the provincial debt has actually increased by \$23 billion under Harris since 1995.

This illustrates one of the main differences between the Tory platform at the Liberal Party's 20-20 Plan. Dalton McGuinty isn't promising tax cuts until he has balanced the budget.

Specifically, the Liberals propose to spend \$600 million on hospitals, \$475 million on schools, \$400 million on colleges and universities, \$510 million on home care, \$250 million on children in poverty and \$200 million to reduce financial burdens on municipalities.

Much of this funding is geared to undoing the changes brought in by Harris.

But if it looks like McGuinty is campaigning on a plan to roll back everything Harris has done, the NDP, predictably, takes it one step further.

Howard Hampton's troops are proposing to take back all of the tax cuts — at least from those who earn \$80,000 a year or more — and dedicate the money to public services, notably health and education.

Barring any new ideas rolling in with the election call, you know where the battle lines are drawn.

It's just a matter of figuring out where you stand.

# OPINION



Doug Devine

## Prepare for creation of New York City

Despite warnings for about five years, it still came as a shock last week when strong rumours surfaced that Mike Harris plans to turn York Region into a mega-city if he's re-elected.

The unannounced and unconfirmed plan is to force amalgamation of the four regions surrounding Toronto — creating the mega-cities of York, Peel, Durham and Halton.

Any local politicians or residents still playing ostrich on the issue may want to consider the source of the rumour, the reaction to it and Harris' track record.

The source of the rumour is Vaughan Councillor Michael DiBiase, a longtime Tory supporter and party worker. And recent actions by Markham Mayor Don Cousens, Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell and Aurora deputy mayor John West — all with strong Tory ties — also suggest there is a new-found urgency to amalgamation talks.

And local Tory MPP Frank Klees, who in the past has insisted his party wouldn't force amalgamation, is suddenly waffling. Although he said the Tories still plan to let local politicians "do the right thing" themselves, he agreed his government "may well have to take unilateral action."

As for Harris' track record, he never mentioned his mega-plan for Toronto during the 1995 election campaign, but later forged ahead with it despite widespread opposition.

All of which suggests it may be too late for local politicians and residents to have any control over their future, even though I suspect most oppose making York one city.

Southern residents should be opposed because they will be forced to subsidize even more services for northern residents.

Northern residents should be opposed because they will lose control of their communities to the more powerful south.

If York politicians want to provide Harris with a viable alternative, they could make a strong argument for splitting York into two cities, somewhere around Stouffville Road.

That would eliminate the needless duplication of staff and services, yet still give residents a chance to preserve what's important to their communities.

But they'll have to hurry. If Harris emerges victorious next month and there's no local movement toward amalgamation, we'll be welcoming the new millennium as the Newest New York City.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Look at yourself in mirror

Re: *Working moms raise their children as orphans*, April 20.

Letter-writer Linda Vetere may not feel guilty about having the luxury of being a stay-at-home mom, but she should be ashamed of the way she judges those who work outside the home to raise our kids.

I thoroughly support your right to stay home if that's your choice. However, as a single mother of two school-aged children, I don't have the options you do. I work 40-plus hours a week at a job I actually like going to.

Not all single moms are as lucky as I am. Many can't find jobs at all, let alone ones that understand the demands of full-time work versus single parenting. I chose to have my children, but I certainly didn't choose to be doing it alone.

There's nothing to be ashamed of in earning a wage, especially if you have children. I consider myself a good role model for my daughter, who sees me earning an income to support us, and also to my son, who sees me as a full-time working mother.

I couldn't help noticing you didn't take aim at fathers who work. Don't they have any responsibility when it comes to raising their kids? What happens when mothers are the major breadwinners in a family?

I fully trust the daycare facilities that I chose for my children, and I don't take them to McDonald's or Toys 'R Us out of guilt, but simply the same sense of freedom and fun that everybody else does.

I'm raising my kids to be open-minded individuals responsible for their own decisions whenever possible. Not surprisingly, they take issue with your

remark that they're no better than orphans. I truly think you should ask yourself how you're raising your children, it seems to me that they're not exposed to a wide range of ideas and opinions.

My choices and my motives are personal and apply to me alone.

DONNA METCALF

### Horses aren't machines

I was shocked to hear of Elizabeth Hader's tragic riding accident at Wagon Wheel Ranch.

I've been an avid horseback rider for more than five years now. I have been riding at Wagon Wheel for a year.

I frequently rode the horse whom Elizabeth was riding at the time of her fall. I would just like to say that the animal in question seemed to be one of the gentlest and most forgiving horses I have ever ridden.

Nevada would never have intentionally scared me.

However, a horse is not a machine and can't be expected to act as one. It is the responsibility of the rider or his/her parents to make certain that they know how to engage in a safe and enjoyable experience, while at the same time respecting the animal itself.

This duty also includes making sure the rider has the appropriate head and footwear.

Before one points blames, we ought to look past a quick fix and at the real problem: A lack of knowledge and respect for riding and the noble creatures involved in it.

NIKKI GRANT  
MARKHAM

## Stouffville Tribune

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