

Stouffville Tribune

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OPINION



Dave Teetzel

Politicians could stall GTA powerhouse

The Greater Toronto Area could soon be a powerful city region, a trading powerhouse that dwarfs the province in influence.

Of course, the Tower of Babel could have been the world's tallest freestanding structure and look how that worked out.

Thomas Courchene, an economics professor at Queen's University, told a conference in Los Angeles that the GTA accounts for half of Ontario's gross domestic product and 20 per cent of Canada's GDP. No city region in the United States can claim that big a share of its national economy.

But what looks like an economic Ferrari from behind the ivy-covered walls of a Kingston university may be a jerry-rigged Pinto from the inside.

And this Pinto isn't going to get to the promised land envisioned by the good professor so long as there are a few dozen drivers arguing over who gets the wheel and who pays for gas.

This Pinto won't get to the promised land with a few dozen drivers arguing for control.

Courchene says Toronto's emergence as a city region will require "massive" public and private sector investment in infrastructure.

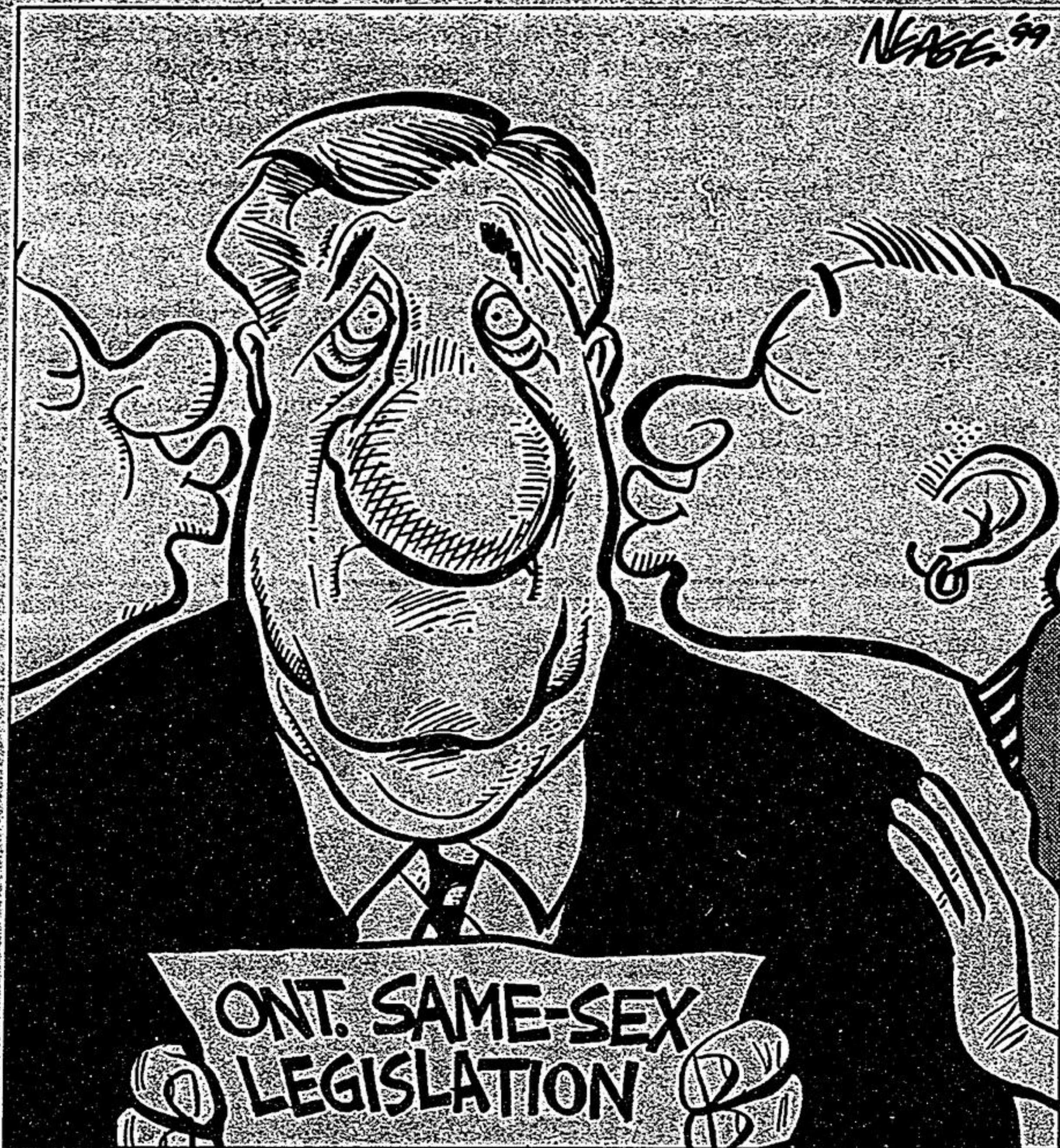
That means somebody has to spend money on roads and pipes and services — all the big ticket items that have been downloaded by the province.

Courchene says the Toronto area needs more flexibility in spending and revenues. Recent provincial legislation has taken away that flexibility from local budgets. And he says the entire GTA must become a single city. The closest thing we have to a GTA government is the Greater Toronto Services Board — and that Pinto has been spinning its wheels for almost a year without advancing an inch.

In short, if the GTA is to become a global city region, local politicians must get co-operation from the province and from each other.

That doesn't change the fact business has gravitated to the Toronto area and has done very well. So long as the GTA offers reasonable tax rates, a decent transportation network and a skilled labour force, industry will thrive, turning this area into the independent economic Goliath described by Courchene.

All our four levels of government have to do is not screw it up.



EDITORIAL

Gilchrist's resignation should not kill plans

Housing and Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Gilchrist's departure from Premier Mike Harris' cabinet won't go unnoticed in York Region.

In fact, the very scandal that precipitated the end of his tenure in the front benches of the legislature may very well have its roots in the rolling hills of the region.

After only four months, the rookie minister bowed to intense political pressure to resign from his seat last weekend while the OPP investigates allegations of wrongdoing.

While Gilchrist continues to maintain he has done nothing wrong, developers complained to Harris' office last month that Gilchrist had told them access to him could only be obtained through his personal lawyer, Peter Proszanski.

Prior to Gilchrist stepping down, it was revealed Environment Minister Tony Clement had already taken over the Oak Ridges Moraine file.

This move led to speculation that Gilchrist had been set up by developers who were dismayed he hadn't been rubber-stamping their plans to change the face of the moraine.

Faced with development plans every way they turn, our municipal politicians and planners have been beseeching the province to take some measures on the moraine, to absolutely no avail, for some time now.

TORIES WASH HANDS OF MORAINÉ

When the NDP led the government in 1994, the moraine was the focus of a position paper, which has graced a dusty shelf since then.

Harris' government seems to have washed its hands of the matter, neither providing funding nor power by legislation to halt development.

York, Peel and Durham regions have drawn up long-term strategies to protect the moraine, but they can do little without the province.

Has York Region lost a knight in green armour who, at last, was making a move to protect the moraine?

While the question of who heads the ministry should have no bearing on how these environmentally sensitive lands are developed, York Region could obviously benefit by having, not so much an ally, but, simply, a representative to nudge the province into finally taking some action on this issue.

Gilchrist's resignation will also have another impact in the region.

The mellowed but firm Harris emissary of amalgamation made it very clear recently that restructuring will occur in York Region, as long as a Tory government rules the land.

AMALGAMATION LETHARGY

He was able to prompt our regional and municipal governments out of their quarrelsome lethargy — finally, we have seen some movement on an issue that, until last month, had only resulted in a lot of parochial tail chasing.

Newmarket has initiated a study on the amalgamation of the region's six northern municipalities, while Vaughan has hired a consultant whose preliminary report indicates a significant amount of duplication of services.

It would be a tragedy to see this impetus dissipate.

Gilchrist had made strides in a portfolio laden with difficult issues.

It's essential the ministry's initiatives don't lapse during Gilchrist's investigation, which must be done efficiently and expeditiously.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Humane society follows wildlife release standards

In response to a letter from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Toronto Humane Society has gathered the following information to assure area residents that the Toronto Humane Society follows the Ministry of Natural Resources standards in all aspects of our wildlife care.

The ministry's standards for a wildlife custodian are:

1.) A wildlife custodian shall not release rehabilitated wildlife on private property without obtaining written permission from the landowner prior to release.

2.) The wildlife custodian shall release raccoons ... regardless of their age when captured, within one kilometre of the original capture location or shall euthanize them.

3.) Rehabilitated orphaned raccoons may be released beyond the one kilometre range set above if the ministry is notified and has approved in advance of the release.

The Toronto Humane Society's wildlife rehabilitation unit has not released any raccoons in 1999.

The society is awaiting approval from the ministry to release orphaned raccoons now in the care of the society.

All raccoons that are released are vaccinated against distemper and rabies, and there 16 raccoons awaiting release by the society.

The society will only release four to

six raccoons at a time, and the society does not release on farmland because of the nuisance raccoons bring.

Also, the society has a form that is filled out by property owners prior to the release of any wildlife.

I hope this assures residents that the society takes its wildlife custodian duties very seriously and would never put the welfare of the animals, or the people, in jeopardy.

JACK SLIBAR
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY

Lions club says thanks to its many supporters

The Markham Lions Club would like to thank the community on behalf of ourselves and the more than 40 antique vendors at our annual show held from Sept. 17 to 19.

We would also like to thank every body who supported our food booth at the Markham Fair, Oct. 1 to 4.

With your help we raised more than \$20,000 from these two fundraisers.

The money will be used to support many sight-related and community-related projects.

Your donations do make a difference to the community.

Thank you for helping us to help others.

DICK PEEL
PRESIDENT
MARKHAM LIONS CLUB

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