

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
9 Heritage Rd., Markham, ON, L3P 1M3

Publisher: Ian Proudfoot

General Manager: Alvin Brouwer

Editor in Chief: Brenda Larson

Director of Advertising: Debra Weller

Deputy Editor
Debora Kelly

Editor

Julie Caspersen

Production Director

Cheri Kay

Distribution Director

Barry Goodyear

Online Publishing

Manager

Brian Kirtik

Classified Manager

Ann Campbell

Retail Sales Manager

Stephen Mathieu

Inside Sales Manager

Stacey Allen

Business Manager

Margaret Fleming

Office Manager

Vivian O'Neil

OPINION

TELEPHONE

(905) 294-2200

FAX: (905) 294-1538

EMAIL: newsroom@econsun.com



Brenda Larson

Middle-of-the-road approach led to job fund scandal

For years, Jean Chretien's Liberals have retained popular public support while they espoused a feel-good philosophy, spent money on publicly supported programs, cut a bit of our tax burden and walked a course best described as middle-of-the-road. Nothing major, nothing major risked, nothing major done.

It has been a workable approach to retaining power. Don't anger anyone, don't offend anyone, don't hurt anyone.

But the same kind of mediocre technique has created a billion-dollar scandal from which this government may not recover.

An audit of Human Resources Development Canada has discovered that shoddy paperwork and a failure on the part of administrators to ensure money was spent wisely meant \$1 billion was wasted on job creation projects.

The programs that received grants certainly sound worthy — literacy programs, youth job training programs, summer jobs, employment skills training for people with disabilities and job creation in high unemployment areas.

But because the paperwork is so lax, it's almost impossible to indicate whether or not the programs were a success or failure — that is, worth the grant money tossed their way.

The opposition parties are attacking the credibility of the department and of its minister, Jane Stewart, charging that HRDC grants are simply a slush fund to buy votes in key ridings.

On the surface, it appears the grant money was never ending.

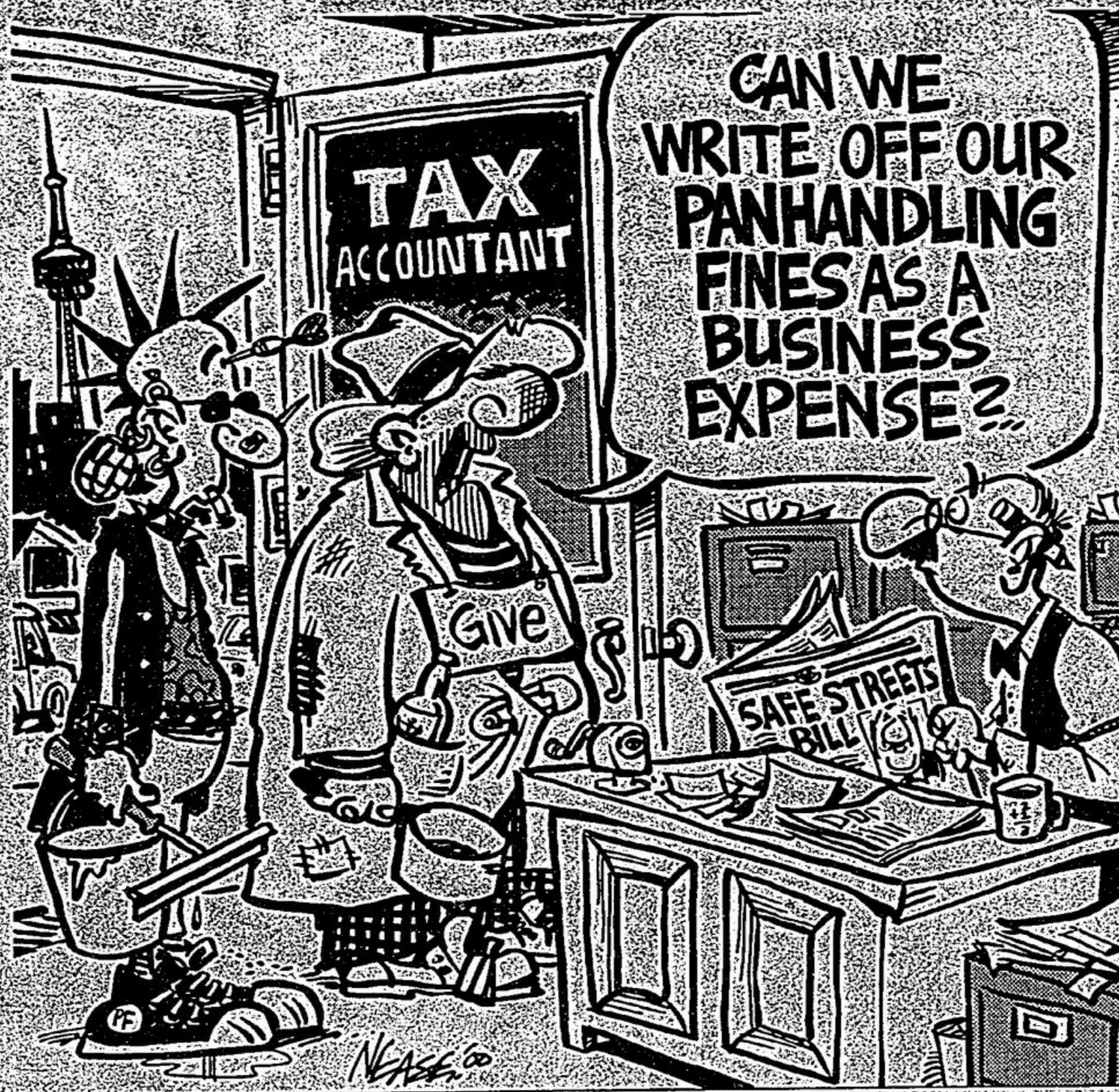
But Stewart knew there was a problem and had already undertaken a plan to establish better methods of financial management for HRDC. Pierre Pettigrew, her predecessor, has also said he knew there was a record-keeping problem, but did nothing about it.

Stewart is left holding a messy bag and the Prime Minister is pretending it's no big deal and will be quickly forgotten as discussions about sovereignty and the government's clarity bill resume.

He's wrong, it is a big deal. The Liberals have blatantly used HRDC grants to pump up ill-planned, ill-supervised programs, pretending the influx of cash would help the economy.

If they only had saved the billion and given us back some of our own money to spend and invest, we could have given the economy a boost while personally benefiting (and the inherent public relations value of tax cuts shouldn't be overlooked, either).

The Liberals are using the public's money to buy the public's support. It's shameful and Canadians should be calling for an inquiry into this billion-dollar scandal and for the resignation of Jane Stewart, who should have done something about it.



LETTERS

If helicopter catches the bad guys we'll all sleep easier

Re: Cops get cash for copier, Jan. 22

York Regional Police Chief Julian Fantino is proud of his air-support unit. "To me, the helicopter program is one that touches everyone. It impacts everything we do and has a direct benefit," he is quoted as saying.

I suspect Fantino's house doesn't lie under the helicopter's flight path, as ours seems to, and he doesn't benefit from helicopter surveillance in the early morning hours, as we do.

Our family is woken every morning around 3 a.m. as Fantino's helicopter thunders overhead. It feels like we're in a military zone.

Maybe we are selfish, unwilling to sacrifice our sleep for the community's need for law and order.

Cops and robbers, O.J. Simpson style, can chase down the bad guys.

But if all children can grow up free from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, assured of proper food, housing and education, they have a better chance of becoming a cop than a robber.

Fewer robbers, fewer helicopters. And then we'll all sleep.

C.F. BAUER
AURORA

Give surplus back to the taxpayer, to whom it belongs

Re: Region's decision: Where to spend \$25M, Feb. 1

Before York Region ratifies its budget for 2000, the finance committee, chaired by Markham Mayor Don Cousens, should give serious consideration to offering residents a tax cut with the \$25 million in reserve funds.

Both the region and town coffers find themselves with excess funds directly attributed to years of over-taxation.

As a result of the strong economic growth we are experiencing, the time has come to give all tax classes, commercial, industrial and residential, a break.

In 1998, our politicians voted in favour of a tax increase. With millions of dollars accruing interest at their disposal, this was clearly unjustified.

Taxes should be increased when conditions

dictate, not simply to pad the war chest.

The finance committee should not be satisfied with a simple tax freeze for 2000. They should direct a portion, albeit small, to where it belongs — the taxpayer.

JOHN VALERI
UNIONVILLE

Moraine battle lines drawn between people and politicians

Re: Preserving moraine means declaring ownership, a column by Dave Teetzel, Jan. 20

In his column, Teetzel expresses his sympathy for Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell and his council during the recent meeting concerning the Oak Ridges Moraine.

He maintains that Bell knows what he is talking about concerning OMB decisions and that "the will of the people doesn't mean squat."

Well, I was at that meeting and what I witnessed was something totally different.

I watched a group of arrogant, aloof individuals directing irritated looks at the public who had come out in hundreds to voice their will regarding protection of the moraine.

The meeting was held in a room that can hold with comfort 100 people. There was probably in excess of 500 people in attendance. The media reported it was closer to 1,000 people. I cannot confirm this as I was squashed against a column most of the evening unable to turn my head.

Bell's reluctant apology for holding the meeting in such a small venue came across as

completely insincere.

Contrary to what Teetzel may think or what those politicians believe, something fundamental was at work that evening. It was a case of the normal Joe saying, "I'm mad, and I am not going to take it anymore."

People are sick of being told their opinions are not required nor wanted by their elected representatives.

They are angry that the OMB, supposedly the last resort for protecting their communities, appears to have become a rubber stamp, allowing developers and their political buddies to do what they wish.

I believe we are witnessing a new militancy from the public concerning the environment, urban sprawl, forced amalgamation of communities and uncontrolled and destructive development that benefits no one except a few powerful developers.

I came away from that meeting convinced the present Richmond Hill council will deservedly not survive the next municipal election.

We need politicians in tune with the needs and desires of the electorate.

They will not be alone. Many of their compatriots in other York Region communities will be joining them.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is a unique wonder of nature sustaining an ecology that must be protected at all costs.

And if, to do that, we do not follow the rules laid down by self-interested parties, then so be it. The battle lines have been drawn.

MIKE SHACKLEFORD
SCHOMBERG

LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor,
9 Heritage Rd.,
Markham, ON, L3P 1M3
Email: letters@econsun.com

Stouffville Tribune

Serving the community since 1888



Canadian Circulators
Audit Board Member



Ontario Press Council

Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement #1403419
Subscription rates by mail: 1 year - \$69.55 (tuesdays only)

Stouffville Tribune, published every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, is one of the Metroland Printing and Distributing Ltd. group of newspapers, which includes the Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Alliston Herald/Courier, Barrie Advance, Barry's Bay This Week, Bolton Enterprise, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Shopping News, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, East York Mirror, Erin Advocate/Country Routes, Etobicoke Guardian, Flamborough Post, Georgetown Independent/Action Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Midland/Penetangushene Mirror, Milton Canadian Champion, Milton Shopping News, Mississauga News, Newmarket Aurora, Georgina Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Oakville Shopping News, Orillia Today, Oshawa/Whitby/Clarington/Port Perry This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan/Uberal, Scarborough Mirror, Stouffville Tribune, Today's Seniors, Uxbridge Tribune and City of York Guardian.

Phone: (905) 294-2200

Fax: (905) 294-1538

Classified:

1-800-743-3353

Distribution:

(905) 294-8244