

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Ontario's budget offers future opportunities

It's difficult to be negative about Ontario's balanced budget, a fitting way to start the new millennium.

With its commitment to giving cash back to the people who earn it, its commitment to streamlining the operations of institutions, agencies and boards, its commitment to real-locating funds to where they do the most good, Ontario's Tory budget is no surprise.

The government is simply making good on promises made to the people of Ontario.

Finance Minister Ernie Eves and his team have worked diligently to provide Ontario with a sound fiscal footing for today.

With the combination of 67 tax cuts delivered Tuesday and a stern eye on debt reduction, things are looking up.

The surplus has even allowed Eves to deliver a pleasant surprise to Ontarians — dividend cheques from the surplus, ranging from \$25 to as much as \$200 for citizens who paid taxes.

The critics will take a three-pronged approach in their attack on the payout in particular and on the budget in general.

They'll say, first, that it's a means of vote-buying, simply a feel-good re-election ploy that we should all dismiss. They'll say it's not worth cheering about.

And they'll say the money shouldn't be given back to Ontarians, it should be pumped into health care or education or social services.

But let's take a moment to look everything else the budget contains.

The health-care system is seeing an infusion of about \$300 million to deliver more nurses and doctors to hospitals.

There's an increase in spending on special education, \$140 million, and a promise to reduce average class sizes in kindergarten to Grade 3 by one student.

There's \$300 million for arenas, golf courses and tourist attractions, a cash infusion that helps fuel the economies of small communities. Small businesses will see tax cuts. Major corporations will see their taxes drop over the next six years.

Certainly, the budget does not fully address some of the major concerns Ontarians rightly have — accessibility to health-care services and education funding allocation are the two priorities — but it makes important moves that will allow this government and governments of the future to appropriately allocate taxpayers' dollars to do the most good.

OPINION



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David Teetzel

Solving youth crime problem must start at home

A radio show broadcast from Newmarket brought calls from people across the country, alarmed at the horror stories they hear about youth, decrying the Young Offenders Act.

Joseph Wambach, whose son Jonathan was thrust into the centre of this debate in the most horrific way when he was beaten by a group of youths in Newmarket last June and fell into a coma, led the voices calling for tougher legislation to deal with violent teens.

But the reality is the Young Offenders Act is only a small part of the problem.

Yes, teens would be less likely to commit crimes if they knew there would be serious consequences.

But if the threat of punishment is the only thing that stops young people from brutalizing one another, we are in serious trouble as a society.

Justice Minister Anne McLellan, who was to defend the YOA during the CBC broadcast but made only a fleeting appearance, did make one important point: the goal should be to prevent youth crime, not to find a punishment that expresses our outrage.

And while McLellan and other politicians aren't doing much to help the cause, the good news is there are people right here in York Region who are.

Witness a day-long series of seminars last week aimed at reducing bullying.

Witness the establishment, by the Community Alliance for York Region Education (CAYRE), of an anti-bullying program in elementary schools.

These initiatives reach out to students, parents, teachers, law enforcement and the entire community because we all have to deal with the problem.

Joanne Cummings, who is involved with CAYRE, explained it's important to reach the children early.

Kids who beat someone senseless for a jacket or a pack of smokes — or just because they aren't popular — do it because they have learned that it's important to be powerful. And they haven't learned to empathize with other people.

Sadly, they aren't likely to learn any better until the justice system knocks some sense into them.

But the little ones just entering the school system can be taught the right lessons.

I certainly hope every parent who is demanding a tougher Young Offenders Act is just as strict when his or her own child harms another.

I suspect if they were, violence in the schools and on the streets wouldn't be nearly as big a problem.

A tougher Young Offenders Act fixes the end of the process. It provides an appropriate crisis response when all else fails.

Solving the problem starts at home.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lack of swimming pool at SDSS means children are the losers

As I stroll up Ninth Line, I see to the west the nice little St. Marks Catholic School.

Across the road is the lovely Glad Park school with a nice gymnasium, a ball diamond and a soccer field.

To the east, is our community centre with two large ice pads.

Farther east on school property are two great tennis courts, two large soccer fields and a unique all-weather running track.

Across the driveway to the east is our dependable secondary school with a nice large gymnasium and another one needed.

On this site is another large soccer field and two jumping pits.

On the whole, a nice athletic and leisure area.

Where or when is our lovely swimming pool which should have been completed in this area in 1997?

The children of Whitchurch-Stouffville are the losers. What a shame.

HARRY BOWES
STOUFFVILLE

Return of stolen Toronto Maple Leafs flag would be appreciated

On the night of Sunday, April 30, sometime between 8 and 10 p.m., my son's Toronto Maple Leafs car flag was stolen from our van, as it sat in our driveway, a mere 15 feet from our front door.

Whoever took it managed to pry it from its lodging in a closed window and make something my son had received as a Christmas gift their own.

I've seen this flag in the stores and it costs no more than \$15, but its true value was as a symbol of a 7-year-old's pride in, and enthusiasm for, the team he loves.

We could very easily dismiss this and go out and buy him another, but there is a chance that by asking, we may be able to track this down and teach the person who took it a lesson in the process.

Parents, if your child came home with a Toronto Maple Leafs car flag on or after the night of April 30, please question where it came from.

I know a little boy who would love to have it back.

JACQUIE VESH
STOUFFVILLE

Dangers of smoking do not override freedom of choice

Re: Banning tobacco sales best way to protect health, Letters, April 29.

We all agree smoking is a dangerous habit; even smokers acknowledge this fact.

Since the risks have been made known, I would think that people should be left to make their own choices.

Only fascists would deprive an individual of that free will.

LINDA ELLIOTT
MARKHAM

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.

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