

Stouffville Tribune

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Rick Vanderlinde

Official plans aren't fast rules — they're made to be broken

Like rules, municipal official plans are made to be twisted, bent, corrupted — and eventually, broken.

Official plans are those grandiose visions of how a municipality is supposed to look 10, 15, 20 years from now.

But, in the end, reality rarely bears resemblance to the carefully thought-out rules laid down by urban planners and politicians.

They're almost always broken. Or, in the polite language of the planning bureaucracy, "amended".

Look at York Region's official plan. After more than 20 years of parochial stalling by the region's nine municipalities, the region finally adopted its own OP. That was in 1994. Since then, there have been a dozen amendments. Some of them, no doubt, made sense as logical evolutions of the plan. They may have actually benefited York Region residents.

But most of them were approved for developers. Developers who call on local politicians again and again to allow more and more single-family housing.

Their argument is always economic — it's what the market demands, what the people demand. And if the developers don't get their way, they run to the Ontario Municipal Board to tattle on the few municipal politicians who dare to stick to their official plans.

It's much like the crying child who demands a candy from Dad before dinner. When the parent stands firm, the child goes to grandpa, who slips him a sucker. The rule has been broken and respect for the rule-maker has been compromised.

And this is why we see houses sprawling across our region, eating up more prime farmland, clogging our road network and taxing our water.

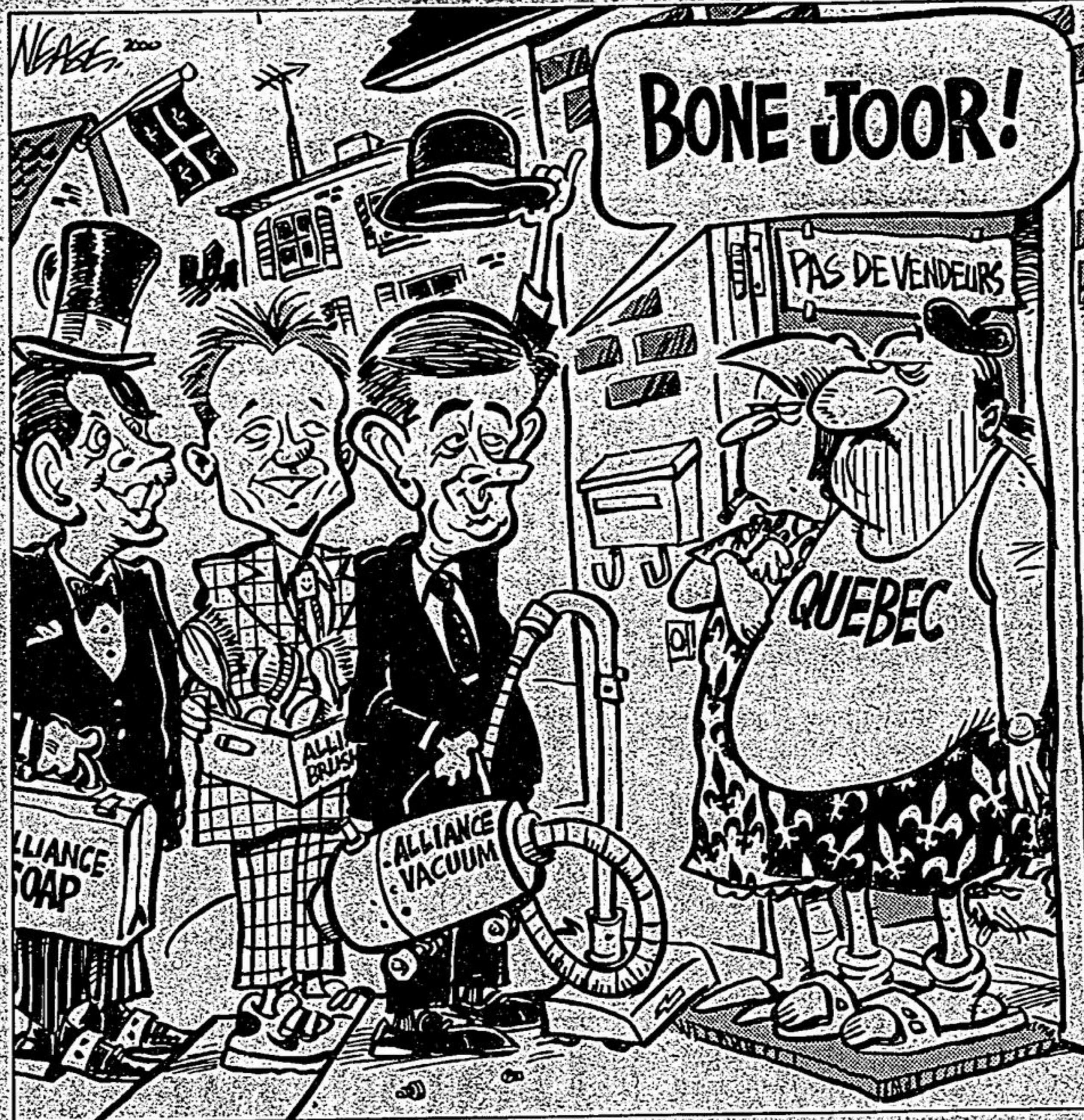
In the long run, it doesn't work. There's a computer game called SimCity that can show you that. If you plan a city the way Ontario's are planned on SimCity, you're in for trouble. But there's an advantage to a virtual city. As the mayor of SimCity, you say what goes, not the developers or the OMB.

Of course, real-life urban planners know what works. That's why the concept of the Queensville mini-city was embraced so warmly by York Region's planners. Based on the nodal planning concept, it's seen as one of the solutions to urban sprawl.

So, after a lengthy OMB hearing, the first step to a self-contained town of 30,000 was taken.

But there are already cracks in the plan. Last month, East Gwillimbury council allowed the developer to transfer industry meant for Queensville further south to Sharon.

But who can blame E.G.'s politicians? They were only doing what's been done so many times before — amending a plan that was meant to be amended.



LETTERS

Councillors should adopt sober behaviour while doing business

Re: Taxpayers foot booze bill for Newmarket councillors, June 10.

Councillors Diane Springstein and Dean Burton should be commended for their position on the town's underwriting of alcohol consumed at lunch or dinner meetings.

In a day of tight budgets, surely this should not be an accepted practice, since many have strong personal feelings about the role of alcohol in our society.

Humeniuk suggests that "drinking alcohol during business meetings is an accepted practice in the corporate world today", and therefore it is virtually necessary to the negotiating process.

With respect, I believe this is nonsense.

I'm unaware of her business background, but in my experience the majority of business people still abstain from the consumption of alcohol if business is to be conducted over lunch or dinner. This is my experience, but by no means "standard business practice".

Hopefully, council members will reconsider this and look for every opportunity to economize while, at the same time, model the sober behaviour we have a right to receive.

JAMES BOEHMER
STOUFFVILLE

Love my neighbourhood, hate the pesticides

Love my neighbourhood, hate the pesticides. It seems that everyone has hired a company to spray questionable products on their grass.

The lawn may look nice, but have the risks to people and animals been considered?

Pet owners spend hundreds of dollars having their pets vaccinated against disease and then let them outside to breathe and romp in the poison. And what about children? Do I want my family exposed to known carcinogens? No.

Let's take a proactive approach. Continue to publish articles that educate the public. Keep reminding everyone of the dangers of pesticide use and find experts to write articles on alternative gardening methods.

Help fix the problem.

CAROL SHEARDOWN
AURORA

Dogs shouldn't be left locked in cars on hot, humid days

With the hot, humid weather fast approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to remind people of the dangers of leaving their dogs in the car while shopping or running errands.

Two weeks ago, I spotted a young poodle in a stifling car with only one window cracked open.

I went into the store and asked the manager to page the owner of the car.

The car owner just happened to be in the check-out line and overheard me.

I scolded her as I was very upset and she promptly went to rescue her little pup.

The best solution would be to leave your beloved pooch at home. If your pooch must come with you, do not leave him in the car for any length of time.

He should stay with you or be tied up outside in the shade with water on hand. In hot weather, a window or two cracked open is not enough, as the car's interior becomes unbearably uncomfortable in a very short time.

These unthinking pet owners should try sitting in their cars on a hot day with the windows closed or even opened a crack for that matter and see how long they can last.

This is abuse and I will not hesitate to call the Ontario Humane Society if I happen to spot some poor animal trapped in a hot, stifling car this summer.

I hope others keep a lookout for these occurrences. Someone has to care about these poor, defenseless creatures.

ANN CLARKE
AURORA

Province's legislation is demeaning to teachers

An open letter to MPPs Julia Munro (Durham-York) and Frank Klees (Oak-Ridges).

To volunteer: to do of one's own accord, do on one's own initiative, do of one's own free will, take upon oneself, take responsibility.

The Dr. J.M. Denison Secondary School council unanimously wants you and your government to know how disappointed we are with many aspects of Bill 74 — the Education Accountability Act 2000, particularly the arbitrary participation for teachers in co-instructional activities.

During our children's educational experience, the parent members of our council have spent many hours in schools, in classrooms assisting and supporting teachers. We have seen the school milieu on a first-hand basis day after day. We do this because we want to. It is called volunteerism. If such behaviour were to be mandated, it would cease to be voluntary and we would stop. There would be no sense of joy.

We also observe teachers. That happens when one spends a lot of time in schools. We watch them as they, too, volunteer their time and share their own sense of community with our children, the future of Ontario. They give their time willingly, selflessly. We watch them teach our youth by example.

Teachers are professionals and your legislation is professionally demeaning. Caring values for life, for good citizenship cannot be mandated or legislated. When that happens, those values disappear forever and with them the gift and the joy of giving.

NANCY MURDEN
CHAIRPERSON, DENISON COUNCIL

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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