

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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OPINION

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Tracy Kibble

Region's commuters would appreciate having travel options

Some would say I live in the boonies.

But I guess that depends on where you want to go.

The big town of Pefferlaw is about 90 kilometres from Pearson International Airport (or a three-hour round trip during rush hour).

North York, on the other hand, is a breeze at about 65 km and Markham seems a mere jaunt at 55 km, or about an hour's drive, one way.

I know this because I travelled the distance for more than five years to get back and forth to work.

The miles add up on the speedometer (at about 120,000 km in three years.) Each year means two sets of rotors, two sets of brake pads, at least one tune-up, two, maybe four, new tires and nearly \$5,000 a year in gasoline.

And if time is money, I have spent a small fortune just to hold on to my career.

When you live north of "the action" and consider employment kind of crucial, you have no choice but to hit the pavement. It's just the way it is.

That's why it makes me nuts when politicians banter back and forth about gridlock on the roadways but come up with no realistic solutions.

Oh sure, York Region has talked about streamlining its transit system. They've talked about asking the feds for cash and Queen's Park to chip in a portion of gas taxes.

They've talked about the crisis commuters are facing as more and more homes pop up across the region.

They've talked about improvements to roads, subway additions and quicker, easier bus routes.

They've talked and they've talked and they've talked.

They've talked so much, they're running out of time to implement a transit plan by the Jan. 1, 2001 deadline. With only five months left, regional politicians are virtually out of steam — and ideas.

And with York's population forecasted to grow to 1.1 million by 2021, it's time to stop talking and start acting.

As a longtime commuter, what a pleasure it would be to have options in travel.

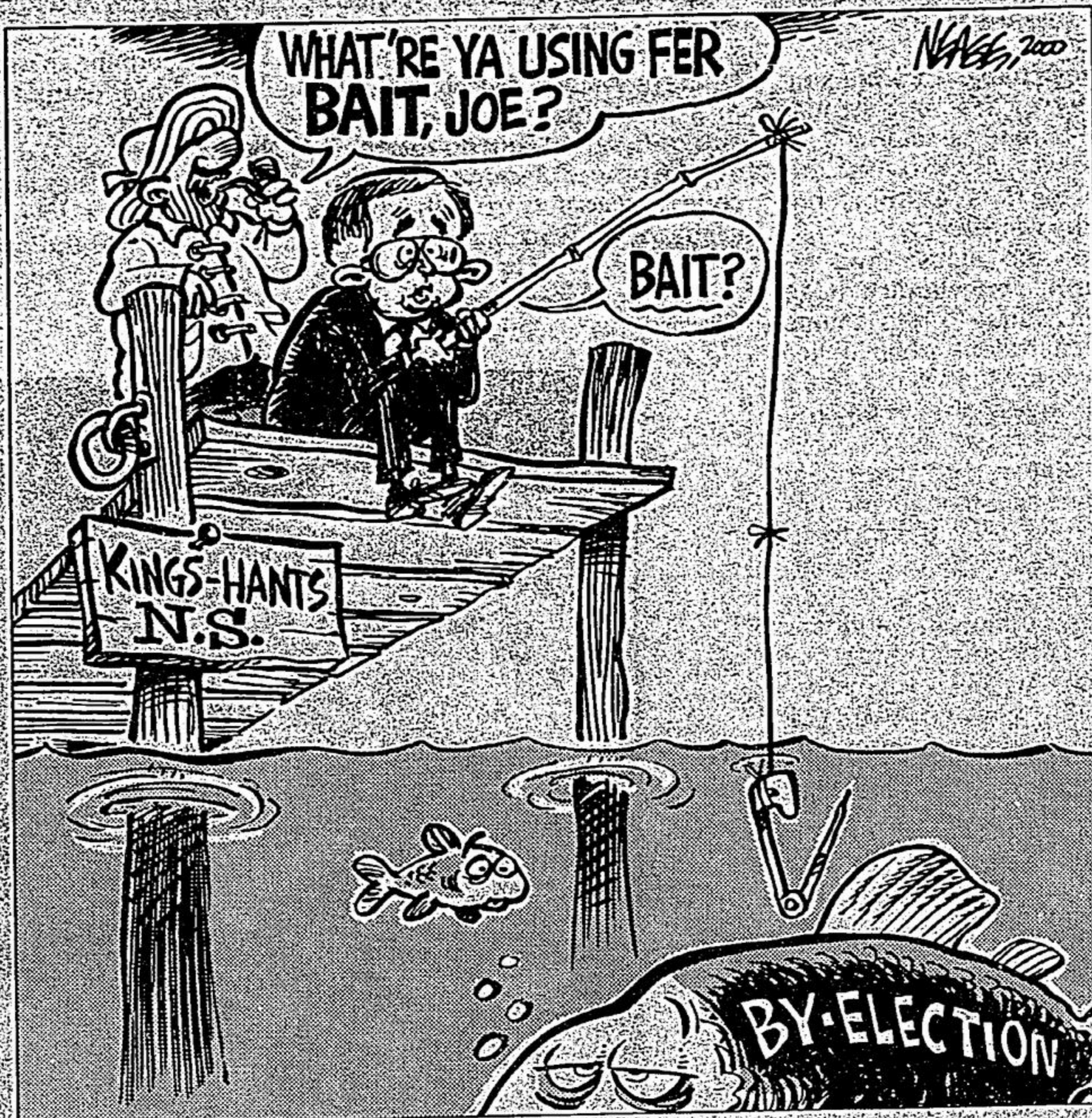
But for that to happen, we have to get our minds out of the dark ages and off the let's-widen-the-roads mentality.

Countries such as Germany, Japan, France and Italy realized long ago road widening is a dead-end street.

Instead, they are offering residents high-speed travel at low taxpayer costs.

Meanwhile, back in York Region, politicians are talking about transit problems and how best to — yawn — solve the problem.

They'd better step on it.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Guns have taken away homeowner's right to safety

We agree with Joan Ransberry's column about guns.

Guns have taken away our right to walk on our property in peace and safety.

This property was intended to welcome our family to a peaceful setting. My mom looked forward to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren coming to see her at what she called "a little heaven on earth."

She came to stay with us in December. I didn't have the heart to tell her that it is hardly safe to get from the car to the house when the shooting is going on. It never crossed our minds that shooting in such a populated area would be allowed until a neighbour and the 'shooting party' would put us and our visitors in such an unsafe environment.

Our homes are much too close together for anyone to be shooting, even though a Whitchurch-Stouffville bylaw allows it.

We cannot do our normal chores, let alone have a walkabout, without the danger of crossbows, rifles and shotguns.

Worse still would be if our non-shooting neighbours move, we may end up with more hunters.

We would like to have the bylaws changed before injury, maiming or death occurs.

L. BUTLER
NEWMARKET

Mike Harris has been a capable financial manager for Ontario

If a Stouffville resident thinks Ontario Premier Mike Harris has bad managerial skills, where does that thinking place Prime Minister Jean Chretien and former Ontario premier Bob Rae?

To keep only two election promises, Chretien blew away \$1.3 billion of taxpayers' money when he cancelled the Pearson airport and the helicopter contracts. Was this ego or good management?

As finance minister in the Trudeau government, he left Canadians with a \$32.4-billion deficit.

Then, there is the really good management of Rae — he gave us 66 new taxes, borrowed \$90 million to buy his way out of the recession then left a \$10-billion deficit.

Harris had little choice but to rein in the administrative spending in all his ministries to eradicate the deficit.

When Harris took control in 1995, there were 15 MRI machines in Ontario. Now there are 27. That's good management of our taxes.

By changing the way school taxes are collected, Harris has kept the greedy hands of the school boards out of the pockets of homeowners. That, in itself, proves he is a capable manager of taxes.

J. SHAW
MARKHAM

EDITORIAL

Big-box centres are a reality we must accept

Parking lots overflowing with cars and vans. Drivers waiting impatiently at times, to make left-hand turns at busy intersections. A confusing myriad of turn lanes and roadways.

All leading to the big draw — the big-name, big-box power centres that are appearing around York Region.

In the south, developments are continuing to grow at Woodbine Avenue and Hwy. 7 in Markham, at Hwy. 7 and Weston Road in Vaughan, and at Yonge Street and Hwy. 7 in Richmond Hill. In the north, at the Newmarket/East Gwillimbury border along Yonge Street, another power centre is growing.

The store names include Winners, Future Shop, Home Depot, Canadian Tire, Sears, The Shoe Company, Marks Work Warehouse, Danier — the list is a shopper's paradise.

For some people, though, big-box developments are paradise lost.

The traffic headaches in the areas surrounding big-box developments — the Weston Road and Hwy. 7 area is probably the best example of this — have residents pulling out their hair.

Every day is a busy day on the roads, every hour feels like rush hour. It's frustrating.

The advantages to big-box development for the consumer are obvious — a shopper can find almost anything he might need or want without travelling all over for bargains. It's convenient. The quality of the merchandise is a known factor, no surprises involved. It's easy.

The advantages to the community, while not so apparent, are extremely important.

Big-box developments, with their vast square footage, are tax-base cash cows for municipalities. They provide the funds a community needs to offer high-quality services to residents and municipalities that ignore that opportunity only send the developers elsewhere.

The stores themselves offer employment opportunities to job-seekers in the service industry.

Growth cannot be stopped, but it can be effectively planned and controlled. The big-box developments, while they may mean a headache for some residents, represent the provision of services a community needs.

LETTERS POLICY

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