

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

You could sum up the efforts and accomplishments of the Greater Toronto Services Board since its inception nearly two years ago succinctly.

It's not working.

Let's take a look back.

The GTSB was born Jan. 22, 1999 with plenty of hype and fanfare.

The province — the proud new parent — had high expectations and coddled its new baby.

So powerful was the board going to be that regional governments across the Greater Toronto Area feared its strength would wipe them out.

In early January 1999, one of York Region's most powerful officials even speculated the birth of the GTSB — empowered by its parent to handle only transportation issues — would eventually squeeze the very life out of regional governments.

In fact, Markham Mayor Don Cousens predicted it would take only 18 months before the GTSB would start making other important decisions on issues such as policing, social programs, water and sewers, economic development and garbage.

But looking back, politicians couldn't have been more wrong.

On January 2001, the province's prodigy will be two years old. Instead of the predicted force it would grow to be, the GTSB is nothing but a toothless, powerless, weak body that has accomplished next to nothing.

It has little mandate, no consensus and no heart.

The board, made up of politicians across the GTA, has passed one substantial report in two years (last July) calling for \$5 billion to ease road gridlock and increase transit options over the next 20 years.

So, who should we blame for adding this additional government tier to our already overpopulated political ring?

First, we blame the province.

It initiated the GTSB to streamline services and cut costs, after all. And now it's not listening.

Second, we can blame the politicians who sit on the GTSB.

They waste time, discuss issues unrelated to transportation (the board's sole mandate) and continue to act like spoiled NIMBYs who can't see past their own green pastures.

It's time for the province to slide into the seat and drive this bus home.

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,
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OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Joe Wamback shouldn't run for office when son needs him

Now that it is official that Joe Wamback has been nominated as a candidate for the federal Progressive Conservative Party, I want to go on record to tell you how strongly I feel that this decision is wrong and that Mr. Wamback should immediately withdraw his candidacy. I have outlined my opinion regarding this issue as follows:

1. The Wamback family, especially young Jonathan, needs Joe Wamback now more than ever. I believe the Wamback family has not fully recovered from the tragic incident last year and that the healing process will take years, if ever, to complete. The reality of running for office is that the campaign race takes an individual away from his or her family for commitment after commitment. Quality home time is rare. If Wamback is elected, his time with his family will be virtually non-existent. This is simply unfair to a son who only a few months ago was in a life-threatening coma and who appears to need the active involvement of both his parents for his lifetime.

2. Joe Clark and his team should be ashamed of themselves. To my way of thinking, the federal Progressive Conservative party has taken advantage of a victimized family. To see Jonathan on centre stage in the media trying to do his best to obtain signatures for his petition surely grasps at the heartstrings of the general population. For

the Tories to use him to raise the party's declining profile in my view is morally wrong. Is this what a federal party severely lacking in leadership and focused on the past has to resort to — to use the tragic plight of a young man to further itself?

3. The Wamback family has a responsibility to work toward the goals of the petition to change the Young Offenders Act. This is a promise that this family has made to hundreds of thousands of people who signed up for the cause. My view is that this family should strive toward lobbying our current governments for change and then, after success, Mr. Wamback could run for office.

To my way of thinking, this situation is simply not right. I encourage Mr. Wamback to withdraw his candidacy for the federal Progressive Conservative party immediately and to make his first priority the health and well being of his son. Second to this, the Wamback family should focus on the commitment made to close to a million people regarding the Young Offenders Act.

If you remember, the Honourable Frank Klees withdrew his candidacy to seek the leadership of the federal Canadian Alliance party because of a point of integrity. A follow-up Toronto Star article on winners and losers slotted Mr. Klees in the winners column because he had the strength and fortitude to keep his principles intact. As a parent of a child who really needs his father, I believe Wamback should do the same.

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John Cudmore

Should we throw our cash behind our national athletes?

Woe, Canada. Is there anyone out there capable of making a decision on what exactly it is we expect our athletes to achieve on the world sporting stage?

If so, please forward to the branch of the Canadian government in charge of sports. On second thought, never mind. It would take at least till 2008 to get through the maze of bureaucratic red tape and buck-passing before the right desk, if indeed it exists, is found.

Which more or less explains why we seem content to send our poor, struggling athletes into competition with a snowball's chance in Jamaica to win, place or show against the best competition in the world.

Is fourth, fifth or sixth place good enough, as long as they've fought the good fight? Or should we strive to have our athletes stand on the upper step of the podium, sporting gold medals?

It's only logical that if we want to share in their glory, the least we should do is provide them with a fighting chance. And if that means supporting athletics with some sort of funding, then let's get on with it.

We can either moan and groan that our athletes are grossly underfunded, and thereby under-trained, under-coached and under-everything-else, and incapable of winning against the rest of the world in sports we mostly care little about other than once every four years, or we can suck it up and accept the notion that we, as a nation, do little compared to other countries to aid in their efforts. The dilemma is clear.

If we fund our athletes with more hard-earned tax dollars, a portion of the populace is going to gripe. Can we really afford to pour more monies — the party line is that more funding is provided now than for any other recent Olympic Games — into sports if social programs are suffering, simply to be able to puff out our chests for a few days every four years?

By the same token, if funding isn't to be provided for athletics — keep in mind there is a lot to be said for sports as a national ego boost, you'll recall say, the 1972 Summit Series or any of those Canada Cup victories in hockey — it upsets people.

Ideally, government funding and corporate support would be the answer to addressing shortfalls beginning at the grassroots level. Failing that, how difficult could it be to involve lottery funds in a support plan? Or have each province contribute to a national pool, raising its obligated money any way it sees fit?

The bureaucratic fat cats don't seem to have a clue how to approach this dilemma. Anyway, they're too busy schmoozing to realize or give a rat's ass what our athletes are up against.

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