

Stouffville Tribune

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9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ont., L3P 1M3

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OPINION

TELEPHONE

(905) 294-2200 / (416) 798-7624

FAX: (905) 294-1538

EMAIL: newsroom@econsun.com



David Teetzel

York Region needs to elect fighters who will battle pooling

It has taken three years to download responsibility for social housing, but in all that time nobody has been able to answer the basic question: how can municipal governments possibly provide an adequate stock of decent housing for people with low incomes?

The York Region Housing Corporation will be running more than twice as many units as it runs now, adding 872 public housing units and 302 subsidized units to its stock of 854.

The region has been paying for assisted housing since the province took over the full cost of education (well, that's what they say they did) and down-loaded social services to municipalities in 1997. But municipalities won't be running the system until the end of this year.

In the meantime, Queen's Park has been cutting housing administration costs.

That can only help the region. But it needs a lot more help than that.

Although most of the costs of a rental project are fixed — mortgage payments, for example — there are always maintenance and repair costs. Budgeting for those is more of a challenge.

Most of the buildings in York Region are in fair condition, but all of them are five years old or more. Anyone whose house is more than five years old knows there are lots of little things that have to be done — a new coat of paint here, a patch there, some caulking work someplace else.

But all those little chores will have to compete with roads projects, policing and other essentials for space on the region's budget.

And just because we're taking full responsibility for our own housing doesn't mean Queen's Park will let us off the hook for our share of Toronto's social service costs. We continue to pay more money to the mega-city for its social services than we spend on our own — about \$84 million.

The other shoe drops late next year, when the region takes over administration of private non-profit units and co-ops — more than 6,000 units.

I don't think the councillors and staff at the region would let people's homes become unlivable.

But I don't see much incentive for the region to expand its social housing stock.

In short, our towns are not sustainable without adequate housing for people with low incomes, but we can't possibly provide that housing ourselves while we pay for Toronto's housing needs.

I hope next week's election will yield a slate of fighters ready to take on Queen's Park and re-open the pooling issue.

EDITORIAL

What is wrong with wanting to keep as much as possible of the money we work hard to earn?

Why are we made to feel greedy for questioning the premise that the state has some inalienable right to take as much of our earnings as it desires?

Tax reductions are featured in the federal election platforms of the Tories, Liberals and Alliance — a sure-fire acknowledgment Canadians deserve a tax break of some kind. A strong economy, not to mention a huge budget surplus, have made that event a likely reality. There is, however, dissent over which taxes should be reduced, by how much and how quickly.

For example, let's look at the personal income tax cut proposals. The Liberals would create four rates: 16 per cent; 22 per cent up to about \$60,000; a new rate of 26 per cent on those earning \$60,000 to \$100,000, while the top rate would remain the same at 29 per cent.

The Tories propose maintaining the rates Canadians are anteing up now: 17 per cent for income up to \$30,000; 23 per cent on income up to about \$60,000; and 29 per cent after that.

The Alliance is touting a 17-per-cent flat rate on personal income for everyone earning less than \$100,000. The rate would jump to 25 per cent for citizens earning more.

Markham Liberal candidate John McCallum, who took leave from his job as chief economist for the Royal Bank of Canada to be parachuted into the riding, was quick to attack the Alliance single rate tax plan.

He labelled it "grossly unfair" and "greedy." Why unfair? If everyone pays the same tax rate, do those who make more money not pay more taxes?

Is it unfair because, unlike the so-called progressive tax system, it does not expect higher income earners to hand over a bigger chunk of their paycheques to the government?

Thanks to our "progressive" tax system, middle-class Canadians have been paying higher tax rates than American millionaires.

The bottom line is most Canadians are fed up with emptying their pockets to a profligate government that feels it has a moral right to decide how their money is spent — or wasted — without apology or true accountability.

That is where the real greed exists. Hard-working Canadians who don't begrudge fairly sharing their income to bring essential benefits to all Canadians are not greedy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Longtime supporter cannot vote for Jean Chretien's Liberals

An open letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

It is with great regret that I find myself writing this letter to you and the Liberal party. I am 51 and have faithfully voted in every election since I was 18.

My husband and I have always shown our now grown-up children the importance of voting and brought them with us to show this to them. They now also vote in each election and, in fact, my son is studying political science at Western University and very much wants to get into politics. In fact, his dream is to have your job some day.

I will not be voting in the upcoming federal election because I find myself without a party to vote for. I have always voted Liberal and my parents also did for all their lives. There was never any question about it. The Liberal party's policies have, until now, always been what I have wanted for Canada. However, your recent decision to not support Israel has destroyed my faith in you and your party.

I did not expect you to support Israel and not the Palestinians, but Canada should have

abstained, as the United States did.

We are a country filled with both Jews and Palestinians and your decision has angered many in the Jewish community.

I have listened to many conversations lately and I am not the only one planning not to vote for the Liberals.

We cannot support a party that supports one group over another. Your decision did not end the violence and only caused Jewish people to condemn you and for the Palestinians to consider that they have won this round.

I will not vote for Stockwell Day. His support for Israel only came because you did not. I hope that he doesn't think any of us will be fooled by his so-called support.

So I am left without a party to vote for. No other party in Canada fits my needs and I cannot support your party because it supports a group that is violent to my people.

For the first time in 33 years, I will not vote for the Liberal representative in our riding, Elinor Caplan. I do not understand how she, as a Jew, can accept your party's stand.

Perhaps, one day you will see Israel as a victim also and you will change your stand. Maybe at that time, I can once again vote for the party of my choice.

FAYE MAJOR
THORNHILL

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9 Heritage Rd.,
Markham, Ont., L3P 1M3
Email: letters@econsun.com

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Phone: (905) 294-2200
Fax: (905) 294-1538

Classified:
1-800-743-3353

Distribution
(905) 294-8244