

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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### EDITORIAL

## Shoddy practices give police bad name

York Region's police force is, yet again, being publicly lambasted for its inability to perform a proper investigation.

The latest scathing report was delivered Tuesday in a Newmarket courtroom by Justice William Gorewich, who stated York detectives disregarded the basic elements of the Young Offenders Act in their probe of the death of a four-month-old baby girl two years ago.

Justice Gorewich didn't mince words when he slammed detectives for ignoring crucial evidence and violating the rights of a 14-year-old boy, despite medical findings that should have sent investigators in a different direction.

In short, he said officers failed to examine medical and emergency service reports, ignored requests by relatives of the baby's parents to check the couple's violent past (which included a Children's Aid Society file), provided misleading information to a doctor, brushed aside videotape evidence with the 14-year-old suspect and, most significantly, violated a section of the act that stipulates officers must tell a young offender he may consult a lawyer before making a formal statement.

Justice Gorewich even dragged up the 1984 Guy Paul Morin case, in which York police botched a probe into the death of Queensville schoolgirl Christine Jessop.

Eighteen years later and investigations are still being botched. Why?

Just two months ago, an audit showed the force needs to make nearly 100 changes to the techniques it uses in carrying out day-to-day activities. Fifty-five recommendations dealt with technological support and training.

Police Chief Robert Middaugh made light of the audit, stating, at the time, nothing in the report concerned him and that the dozens of procedural changes being made because of the report would be minor.

It's clear this isn't just about housekeeping; fundamental problems remain with the force's investigative procedures and training.

Chief Middaugh, who wouldn't comment on this latest case because it is still before the courts, suggests the force is still underfunded.

Despite a \$10-million budget increase this year, he said York's force still has far fewer officers than all other GTA forces.

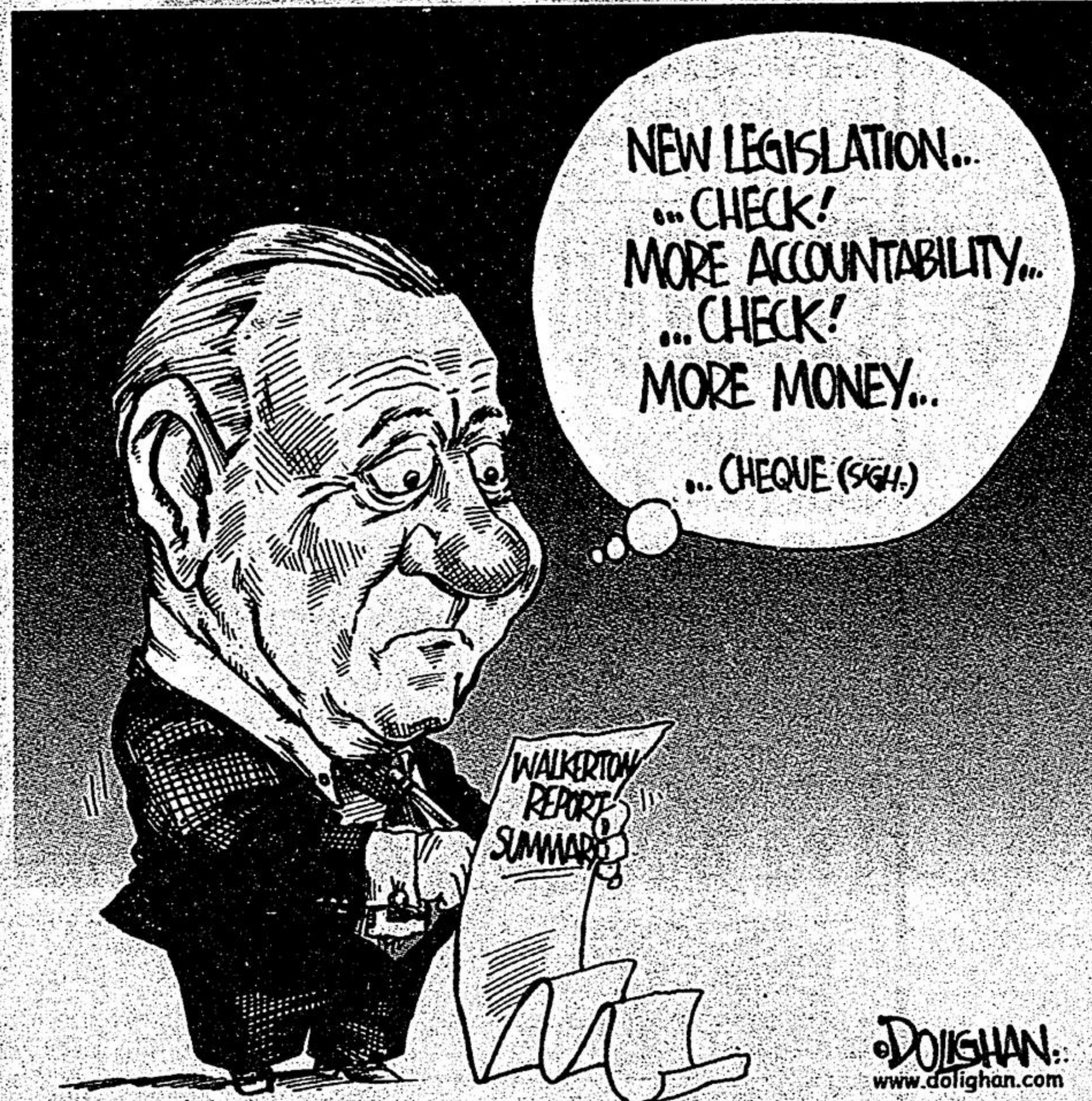
York Region taxpayers are spending more than \$120 million a year fighting crime; a price tag that will only grow in Canada's fastest growing region.

### 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,  
9 Heritage Rd.,  
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Email: letters@econsun.com

# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Taking character oath would restore public trust in politicians

If a "character initiative", as recently espoused by your newspaper and the Region of York, is to be the solution to our social problems, it must start at the top with all politicians taking the following oath when taking office and publicly whenever the occasion seems appropriate.

I solemnly swear to try to always abide by the following statements:

- I will only approve expenditure of taxpayers' money on those items that are legitimately the responsibility of my government or board and will oppose expenditure on any and all items not the legitimate responsibility of my government or board. Legitimate may be by law or custom.

- I will be thrifty with taxpayers' money and I expect similar conduct from others. I will not tolerate padding of expense accounts, accepting a bribe or going on junkets.

- I will always bear in mind my government holds property and assets in trust for the public. I will oppose selling or relinquishing control of such property or assets contrary to the will of the majority of my constituents.

- I will hold the person in charge of spending tax dollars accountable for seeing that reasonable value is received for the money spent.

- Surpluses at the end of the fiscal year will be carried forward to reduce the tax rate in the next year.

- More money left in the pockets of taxpayers will improve their quality of life, meaning more money spent in shops, restaurants and other local businesses, which will boost the economy and create more jobs.

Abiding by these statements will restore public respect and gratitude toward politicians and the politician will be returned to office for as long as he or she wishes to serve.

Some people will say I am naive, but do they know of a better, peaceful solution to our social problems?

EDGAR COREA  
MARKHAM

### Stores shouldn't be selling evil Harry Potter videos

There are flyers in Stouffville selling Harry Potter videos, which are even more dangerous than the books.

One would think store buyers and sellers would have more sense than to sell these witchcraft videos and books. It would seem the mighty dollar matters more to them.

People are not doing themselves or their children any favours by buying these evil and occult things.

It seems children are drawn to the evil influence and are clamouring for them. Do them a favour and teach them the Bible instead.

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Debora Kelly

## Liberal leader cheapens idea of character education

Ontario Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty doesn't know the first thing about character education.

He announced last week he would make it mandatory in Ontario's schools, following York Region public school board's lead. Mr. McGuinty explained details of his \$25-million safe schools plan to students in Richmond Hill.

In Mr. McGuinty's Ontario, not only would all students attending publicly funded schools have character, their schools would be safe — video surveillance would be theirs but for the asking — bully-free and have safety hotlines.

It's simplistic to believe instilling character is as easy as setting out "rules". Character education won't succeed if it's an "anti"-anything program.

Character education has to be about celebrating what's right with young people, while providing them with the self-esteem and support they need to grow into strong, competent, caring and responsible citizens. It just isn't about asking kids to be polite and law-abiding.

Mr. McGuinty has cheapened and belittled all that is good about character by including it as yet another anti-violence measure.

Besides, the money needed to equip every school in the province with cameras would be better spent restoring the jobs of real live human beings — teachers, administrators, guidance counsellors, support staff — who can truly deal with the safety issues in our schools.

His proposals only serve to discredit character education.

In Education Week on the Web, members of the United States' Character Education Partnership are critical of programs "aimed mostly at promoting good manners and compliance with rules, not at developing students of strong, independent character".

Programs of the "cheerleading", "appraise and reward", "define and drill" and "forced formality" variation — which is exactly the kind of character education you would see in many Ontario schools if they were forced to add it to their curriculum — are doomed to failure, they say.

The goals and values of good character must be embodied in everything the school does — something York Region's Catholic school board has pointed out in response to McGuinty's proposal.

"Throughout our curriculum, we emphasize values ... our students are taught that education is a lifelong academic AND spiritual quest," writes chairperson Elizabeth Crowe.

If Mr. McGuinty is suggesting some schools aren't meeting the needs of students, he's absolutely right.

But when it comes to character education and safe schools, the safe schools have to be in place first.

## Stouffville Tribune

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