

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Heath's no-smoking curve ball misses strike zone

Why throw a curve ball into York Region's no-smoking bylaws this late in the game?

Markham Councillor Jack Heath, a member of the region's tough anti-smoking committee, now wants to abolish designated smoking rooms (DSRs), even though many pub owners have already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to install them.

The bylaw restricts smoking to 25 per cent of occupiable floor space in bars, bowling alleys, pool halls and other places where the public convenes.

Where was Mr. Heath two months ago when the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association offered to test air quality in a local restaurant with the installation of an alternative "sophisticated" air exchange system?

He was there.

The committee, including Mr. Heath, agreed to the test, paid for by the association and monitored over a four-month period.

The committee, including Mr. Heath, even instructed regional staff in June to discuss the alternative technology with the restaurant association, which said the method is far less expensive and just as effective as the \$100,000 DSRs many restaurants have already installed.

Why didn't Mr. Heath stand up at that meeting and announce his wish for a total indoor smoking ban?

Why has he waited two months to fire off a media release announcing York, Toronto and Peel should "finish the job" and abolish DSRs?

And why wasn't this latest push issued through the committee, instead of on Town of Markham letterhead? Is the committee on board?

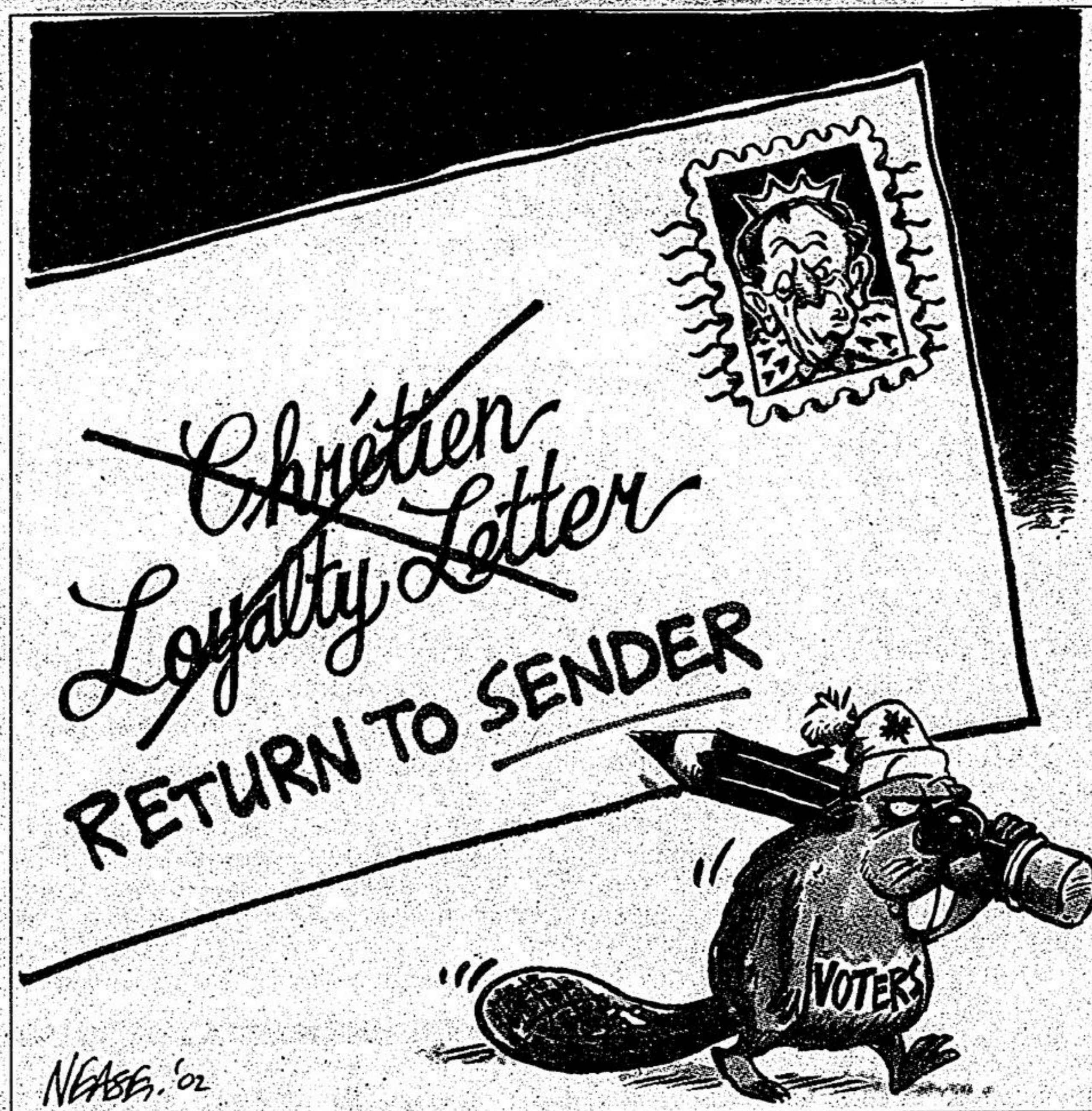
This latest pitch to improve public health only hurts its credibility.

It smacks of political grandstanding and shows a disregard for work already under way by the hospitality industry and regional staff.

It also seems odd Mr. Heath would want to abolish DSRs after fighting several months ago on behalf of bingo halls for an exemption to the bylaw — allowing half the floor space in the charity-run facilities be designated DSRs.

Let's hope Mr. Heath has answers for fed-up restaurant and pub owners when the two sides meet to discuss this latest twist to an already tumultuous social issue.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stouffville not prejudiced; people just want small-town atmosphere

Re: Is Stouffville only for wealthy families?, a column by Joan Ransberry, Aug. 15.

Joan Ransberry basically said we are prejudiced against lower-income families and immigrants. I am the 12-year-old girl she quoted in her article and my words were taken out of context.

The words "affordable housing" were told to us by land developers and I don't believe them for one minute. The first priority developers have is their profit margins.

Because of the cost of housing in the Greater Toronto Area, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define "affordable". I doubt any of these homes planned for Stouffville, even if they are small, will be affordable.

My parents are immigrants and worked hard to get where they are today, just like other immigrants in Stouffville.

Unfortunately, everything is very expensive no matter where we live today. Try to rent an apartment — you would probably be paying \$1,000 per month.

Stereotyping the citizens of Stouffville is very unfair; many of them are not rich, but hard-working people. I don't believe anyone is trying to put a drawbridge on Stouffville; they just want to live in a small-town atmosphere, which is becoming harder to find.

ALYSHA DE SOUZA
STOUFFVILLE

Thanks to all for successful Markham Jazz Festival

On behalf of the committee of the Markham Jazz Festival, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all the many wonderful fans who attended our fifth annual jazz festival.

You made us feel all the work we put into the lengthy preparation of this event was well worthwhile.

The artists who appeared this year — and gave such great performances — all expressed the feeling of being well received by fans. Many of them asked to come back next year to enjoy this atmosphere.

For four glorious days, we basked in the adulation from so many who came out and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

We had wonderful co-operation from the weather, businesses, pubs and restaurants on Unionville Main Street and surrounding areas, Markham Theatre staff, York Regional Police, security staff, The Economist and Sun/Tribune and all the exceptional volunteers. They made us feel truly grateful about the community we live in.

Thank you Markham/Unionville for allowing us to bring this festival to your door. We look forward to making it even bigger and better for 2003.

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Debora Kelly

We must invest in public education

It's tough being an ardent supporter of public education these days.

I'm second-guessing my loyalty to a system, I believe, is not only inspiring a love of learning in my children but preparing them well for a successful future.

Heaven knows, students have been leaving the battle-scarred system in droves since Mike Harris' Common Sense Revolution began to take its toll.

Private schools have seen enrolment skyrocket, thanks to parents who can afford to pay to avoid the hassles of strikes, staff cuts, burgeoning classes and dwindling supplies and equipment.

Would I gleefully jump on the bandwagon if I suddenly had bags of money at my disposal? Who am I kidding? I would. But I haven't lost any sleep over the fact my kids are "left behind" in the public school down the street — despite all the "bad news" (much of it grandstanding and politicking).

On the contrary, their amazing, supportive teachers inspired my every confidence the system still works. My kids eagerly went out the door to class each day. They had the textbooks and materials they needed. Their school offers lots of extra-curricular activities. There's even a music program.

So why I am wondering if that's good enough? Because it's not for thousands of other parents and children, apparently.

A study last week indicated the number of private tutoring franchises in Ontario grew by 60 per cent — from 245 to 396 — between 1996 and 2000.

The study by McMaster University researchers suggests the growth of private tutoring "may alter the face of contemporary schooling".

No longer just for homework help, the centres have aggressively — and, obviously, successfully — taken advantage of the crisis in education. They are selling their services as an essential complement to the public system.

Obviously, a lot of parents think the public system isn't up to the job. If that's true, why the heck are they simply letting the province off the hook? We all are.

Not only are children being pulled from neighbourhood schools and sacrifices being made to meet monthly payments for tutoring, parents are digging deep to pay for basic supplies and equipment that should be funded by the government.

In Ontario alone, parent fundraising has grown to \$37 million a year, according to People for Education.

That, too, only underscores inequities. When schools are funded by donations, the quality of education is a direct reflection of the community's wealth.

The provincial government has to stop stalling on revising the funding formula for schools.

We must give the public education system the investment it needs to provide every child an equal opportunity in life. Our country's future depends on it.

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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Stouffville Tribune

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