

## Stouffville Tribune

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PUBLISHER **Ian Proudfoot**

### EDITORIAL

## Money, obviously, is in education system; time to get on track

Finally, some good news from the province about education.

Premier Ernie Eves has endorsed the report on funding released this week by Mordechai Rozanski calling for an injection of about \$2 billion into the public education system.

Taking a cue from the many school administrators who appeared at the task force hearings, Mr. Rozanski has made it clear present levels of funding are inadequate.

Pointing out special education and student transportation needs immediate attention, Mr. Rozanski also said the government should provide money for teacher salary increases.

While quibbling with the price tag, Mr. Eves has acknowledged increasing teacher salaries is a necessity. With about 80 per cent of school board budgets allocated to salaries, a key issue has been the teacher salary grid.

The province's grid provides rates lower than those paid by most boards, including those in York Region. Since the establishment of the funding formula four years ago, a single increase of 1.95 per cent has been provided.

That imbalance has distorted virtually every aspect of the funding formula.

The boards have been left in the untenable situation of picking the pockets of programs such as special education and English as a second language to pay its teachers.

It's a situation that needs to be addressed immediately, since many school boards across the province face negotiations this year.

The report, however, isn't a condemnation of Tory education policy.

As was pointed out during the consultations by some school boards, including the York Region District School Board, the funding formula itself, for the most part, works.

The formula pays a flat amount for each pupil, replacing the previous method of relying on school board levies.

With the funding benchmarks adjusted to more realistic levels, it's a formula that may now be able to reach its premise of equity.

Mr. Rozanski, however, did caution some flexibility is required to deal with the unique situations faced by some school boards — a factor the Tories have also had to come to terms with when it comes to funding hospitals.

Mr. Rozanski has suggested the Tories be given three years to adjust the benchmarks.

Yesterday, Mr. Eves responded by increasing special education funding of \$250 million a year.

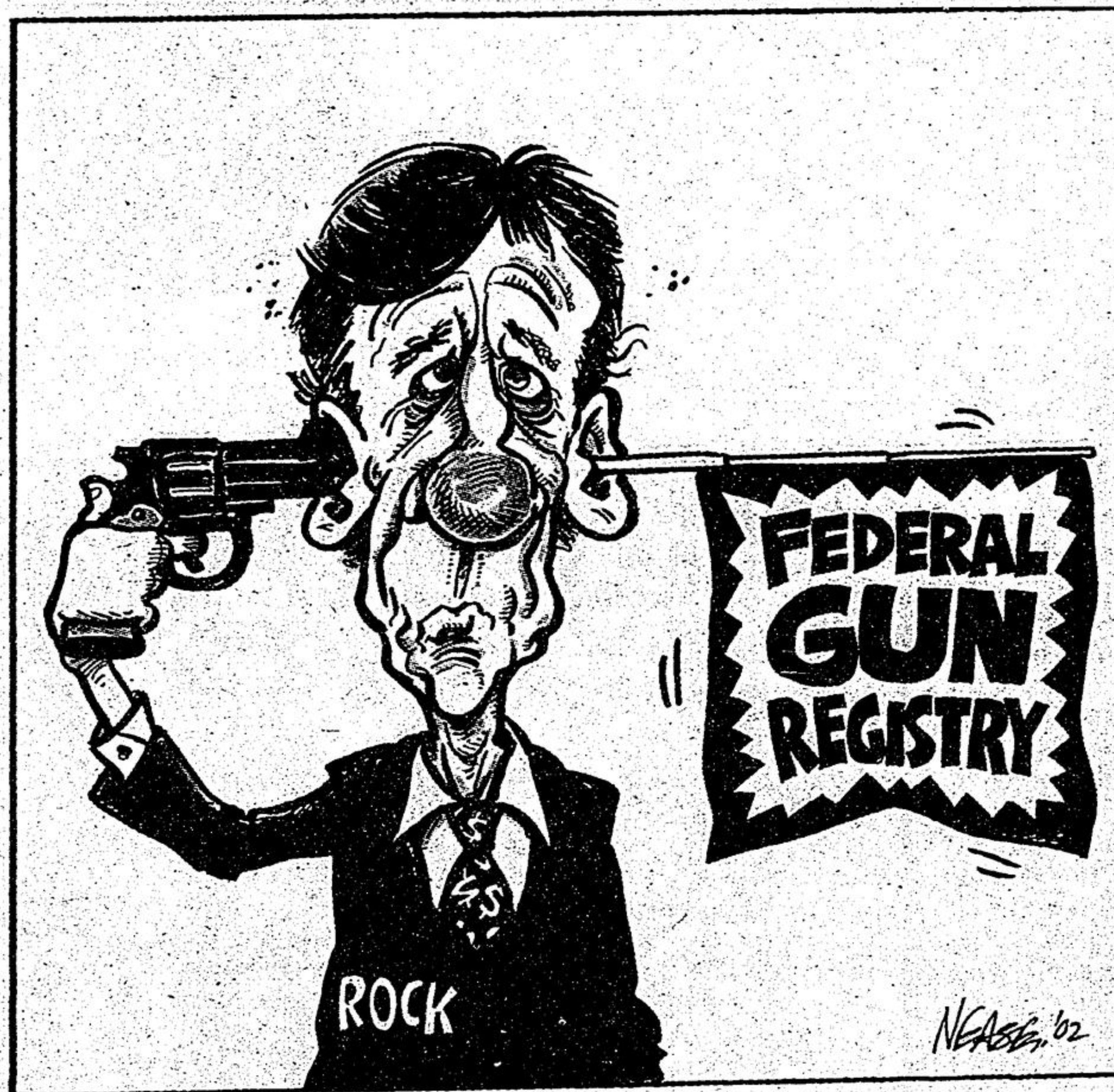
If he is looking for places to find the money, he could cancel the tax break for parents who send their children to private schools.

Certainly, the Tories could cut the ties to high-priced consultants draining millions from the provincial coffers, as pointed out by the provincial auditor.

The province needs to get back to the blackboard — the money, obviously, is there.

Any more dawdling is unacceptable.

# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Too much Stouffville development

My family and I are concerned that all the numerous developments proposed for Stouffville will make it anything but "country, close to the city". With a projected population of more than 40,000, we will be a small city. We will lose our friendly community and that small-town atmosphere.

So many residents came here to get away from Scarborough or even Markham — away from horrendous traffic, increasing crime, polluted air and cramped housing.

We know there has to be growth, but why does it have to be so massive and so rapid, before anyone has had a chance to assess its impact on the town?

We know developers want to earn their millions and quickly go on to pave over the next small town. But why do their wishes overrule the aspirations of residents?

The lifestyle of all the citizens of Stouffville is in jeopardy. We are asking that development be slowed down and carefully monitored before any irreparable damage is done.

SIG KUSATZ  
STOUFFVILLE

### Garrett big asset to York Region

Re: Lastman fingers York CAO, Dec. 5.  
Not surprisingly, Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman, under intense scrutiny by MFP

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inquiry lawyers, so typically attempts to shift the blame from elected officials on to staff's shoulders, namely the then-Toronto chief administrative officer Mike Garrett, when the computer deal with MFP Financial Services soured.

While the inquiry's outcome can't be predicted, one thing is certain. At the inquiry, Mr. Garrett, now York Region's CAO, displayed the qualities of integrity and professionalism that won him the respect of City of Toronto staff.

I worked for the City of Toronto and while I did not report to Mr. Garrett directly, over a period of three years, I came to realize very quickly the calibre of person he was. Regional Chairperson Bill Fisch notes, "Mike Garrett came to us with the highest reputation across the GTA in terms of ability and integrity."

I wholeheartedly concur with Mr. Fisch. Regional politicians would be well advised to maintain a favourable working relationship with Mr. Garrett, who has the inherent abilities and dedication to hard work that will make them look good.

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UNIONVILLE

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Dave Teetzel

## MPPs cave in to firefighters union

Queen's Park has defeated legislation that would have helped the region's smaller towns.

The Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act would have prevented unions from disciplining firefighters for volunteering in their off hours.

The private member's bill combats a policy of the International Association of Fire Fighters that could decimate the volunteer ranks in York Region's smaller communities. The union forbids full-time firefighters from providing fire protection or emergency medical services on a volunteer, reserve or part-paid basis.

If a firefighter is caught breaching that policy, the union can take away his card. In many districts, you can't be a firefighter unless you are a union member.

There are quite a few firefighters who work in Toronto but live in small York Region communities that can't afford a full-time fire department, so they depend on volunteers. The professionals help protect their home community, thereby running afoul of their union.

Last spring, the Toronto local demanded seven Whitchurch-Stouffville volunteer firefighters quit. It was an enormous concern in a town with only 54 firefighters, all but six of whom are volunteers. At the time, half of Whitchurch-Stouffville's volunteers had full-time firefighting jobs elsewhere.

No wonder local MPP Frank Klees was in the thick of Monday's almost unprecedented five-hour debate over the private member's bill.

"The principle that is at stake here in this debate is, do people in this province have a right to work at a job that they choose to work at without intimidation by a union, by an organization, whether that be a political party, whether that be a labour union, whether that be an association?" Mr. Klees said during the debate.

The answer, apparently, is no. And that leaves very little hope for David Juby.

Mr. Juby is a full-time Toronto firefighter and a part-time paramedic working from the Concord station, which houses both firefighters and paramedics.

A Vaughan firefighter ratted Mr. Juby out to the union, which has given him 30 days to quit being a paramedic or lose his union card — and his firefighting job.

Now the Vaughan firefighters association has good reason to be touchy on this issue because the city still uses a volunteer fire department in Kleinburg. There's no way a city with the population and wealth of Vaughan should get away with providing a rural standard of service to any of its residents. This is a good indication of why the association has this rule.

But there is absolutely no merit to the argument the association is "protecting jobs" by interfering with Mr. Juby's right to work part-time.

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