

OPINION

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Editorial

Politicians: stop stunts, focus on issues

Whether the Tories like it or not, it is a provincial election year.

They're dragging their feet on calling it as they languish behind the Liberals in the polls and careen from one catastrophe to another — this week, that would be the dubious practice of loaning Ontario Pension Board money to a developer who has put a substantial effort into lining the Conservative Party's coffers.

Goodness knows, most of us who care want to see the election called sooner rather than later, if only to put a halt to the prolonged "unofficial" campaigning, to which we have been subjected since last fall.

Do we believe Premier Ernie Eves when he says he isn't calling the election now because of the many issues requiring government action, such as the SARS crisis and recent Toronto teacher lock-out?

Or could there be some truth in the need for leadership now?

Timing is everything, granted, but politicians typically always do their best to have us focus on the Good News.

What isn't worth celebrating is the pointless slugging and goofy publicity stunts.

Point in case would be Oak Ridges Liberal candidate Dr. Helena Jaczek's "news conference" two weeks ago outside York Central Hospital to condemn the funding of private MRI clinics, including one in southern York Region. (That's old news, Dr. Jaczek.)

Her own event was upstaged by the Tories' announcement the Richmond Hill hospital would receive funding for a much needed magnetic resonance imaging machine.

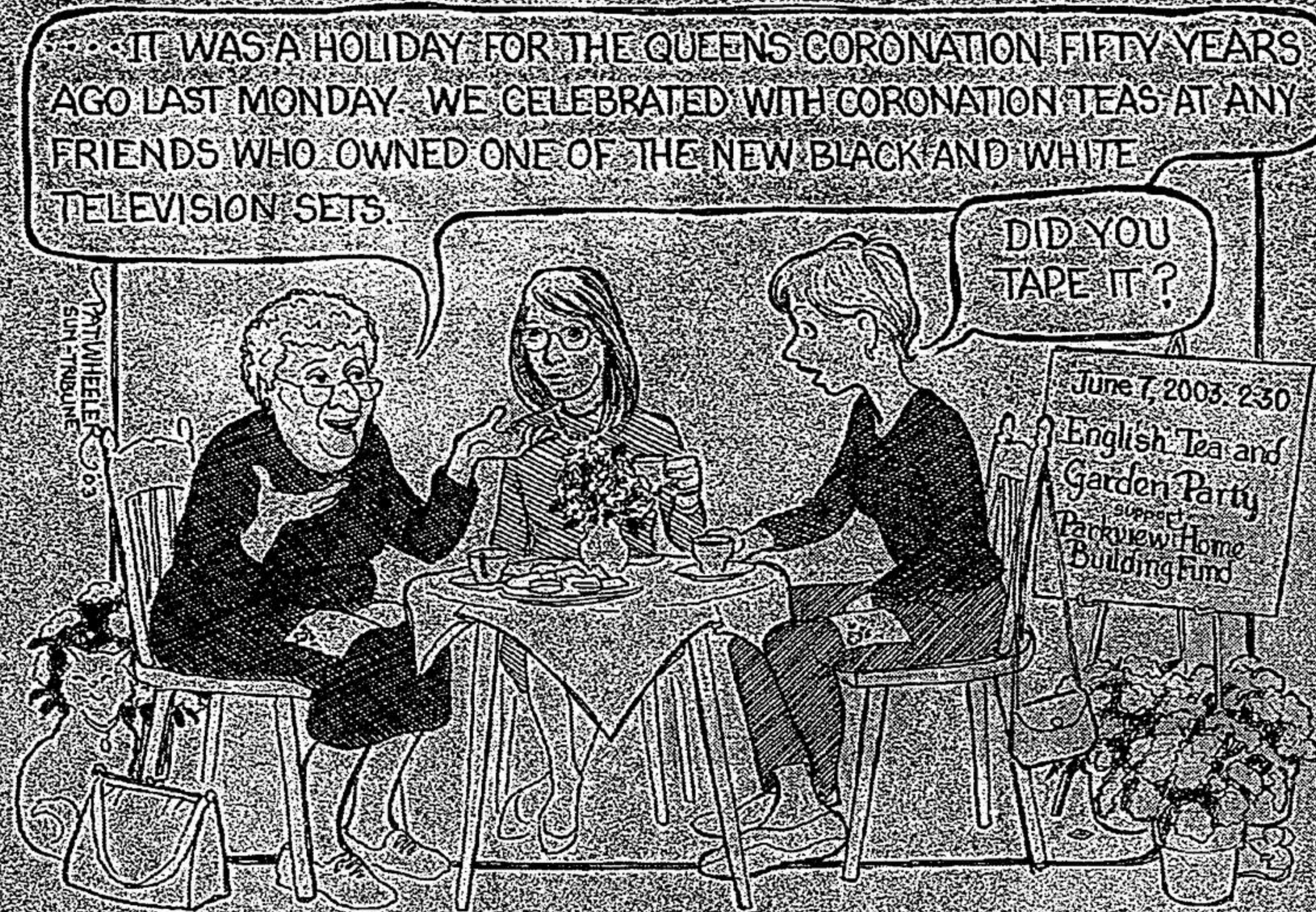
In her eyes it is nothing but a cynical attempt to buy votes.

The reality is booming York Region is served by merely one MRI machine, which is at Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket.

Earlier this year, the Tories announced a private clinic would open in Vaughan, though it may now be re-located to Markham.

Whether the Liberals like it or not, the Tories remain the governing party until they're given the boot.

So, give us a break from the stunts, candidates for all parties, and concentrate on the issues if you must continue with the electioneering without an election in sight.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Small town scheduling political problem child

The event is a one-timer in the community calendar of the local paper.

It's a blip on the radar screen of the town's life.

But to the group organizing the bake sale, fun fair or car wash, it's a big deal.

It's the neighbourhood elementary school, town service club or sports squad's chance to make a splash — so it prays it doesn't rain.

In most cases, it's said group's major fundraiser of the year. Even if the event isn't designed to financially carry the organization through the year, it is supposed to raise its profile.

That's why it's sad to see groups competing for newspaper coverage and customers with their shindigs, bottle drives and plant sales.

About 10 years ago, a community resource office opened on Main Street. Part of its mandate was to run a community calendar listing upcoming events. The idea was, if you were planning an event you would call the office to see if the Loyal Order of Buffaloes or any other organization was hosting an event on the day in question.

Sadly, the office and the calendar died without a whimper.

The next year, I received a nasty call from a sports team whose fundraising dance at the Ballantrae Community Centre had turned into more of a liability than a success. Turns out another larger group hosted an annual dance the same evening at the Markham Fairgrounds. It was a smash hit.

Back in my home town, a buddy boasted about his service club's new home lottery. Tickets at \$100 a pop sold out quickly. The club cleaned up.

The next year, two other organizations held their own raffle with a new home as first prize. All three lotteries did poorly. None were repeated. Everyone lost.

In Stouffville, the community went from not having a breakfast with Santa to having three such buffets on year, all on the morning of the Stouffville Kinsmen Santa Claus parade.

Somehow, Santa made it to all three and the afternoon parade.

Jim Mason is editor of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Stouffville pond health risk that needs cleaning

My husband and I live around the corner from Lehman's Pond at the end of Willowway Court and Millard Street. It was privately maintained by the original land owner.

It is stagnant and filthy. It is not a catch basin, as fresh water does not flow through.

Lehman's Pond is in a densely populated neighbourhood and is a public health risk as a breeding ground for mosquitoes and, in turn, West Nile virus. As nearby residents, we are very concerned that no one has taken responsibility for dealing with this issue.

We understand the municipality has received funds from the Ontario government to fight West Nile virus. We would like to know what it is doing with this money and why it has not addressed the very real threat posed by Lehman's Pond.

JOE AND GRETTA GRAY
STOUFFVILLE

Chance of lifetime for children

Earlier this spring, we spent a delightful evening watching the Wizard of Oz performed by the York Durham Academy for the Performing Arts at the Music Hall in Uxbridge. This is the second show this year for this Stouffville-based organization, which performed Oliver with a different cast at the

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Vaughan City Playhouse in early April.

The cast of more than 60 people between the ages of six and 16 rehearsed at Orchard Park Public School since last September and performed in Uxbridge to three packed houses on the Mother's Day weekend. YDAPA executive director Wayne Hill observed, "These kids are the best. They are motivated, co-operative and fun to be with."

We certainly observed good music and good kids in this rousing version of the classic story about Dorothy Gale from Kansas and her adventures in Oz. Under the expert organization, casting and artistic direction of Neil Bennett, the well-known story took on a whole new look.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Oz last weekend. I personally applaud the York Durham Academy's efforts to bring much needed exposure to the arts to young people in the area.

This is the chance of a lifetime for these children and our community is certainly enriched by the many talented people involved in YDAPA.

LILLIAN RICHARDSON
UXBRIDGE

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