

OPINION

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Editorial

Voters should keep key issues in mind

Who doesn't want things to change? In York Region, despite our booming economy, we've seen our quality of life deteriorate in the past eight years.

- Our children are pawns in a system that has become more about winning political battles than providing quality education.
- Our health-care providers endlessly grapple with the ever increasing demand without adequate financial support and resources.
- Our seniors face a dismal future with a shortage of affordable long-term care options.
- Social services, from daycare to affordable housing, remain woefully inadequate after years of systemic under-funding.
- Our roads and highways are chronically gridlocked, many deteriorating at a rapid pace due to cutbacks.
- Our remaining greenspace is under attack by urban sprawl and pollution.
- And local governments continue to chip away at services after the province downloaded responsibilities to meet promises of tax cuts.

The question facing voters Oct. 2 is who will best bring about that change?

The campaign theme of the Liberals, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, is specifically about change — real, positive change.

The platform clearly outlines policies for education, the environment, policing, the economy, health care, transportation and government accountability.

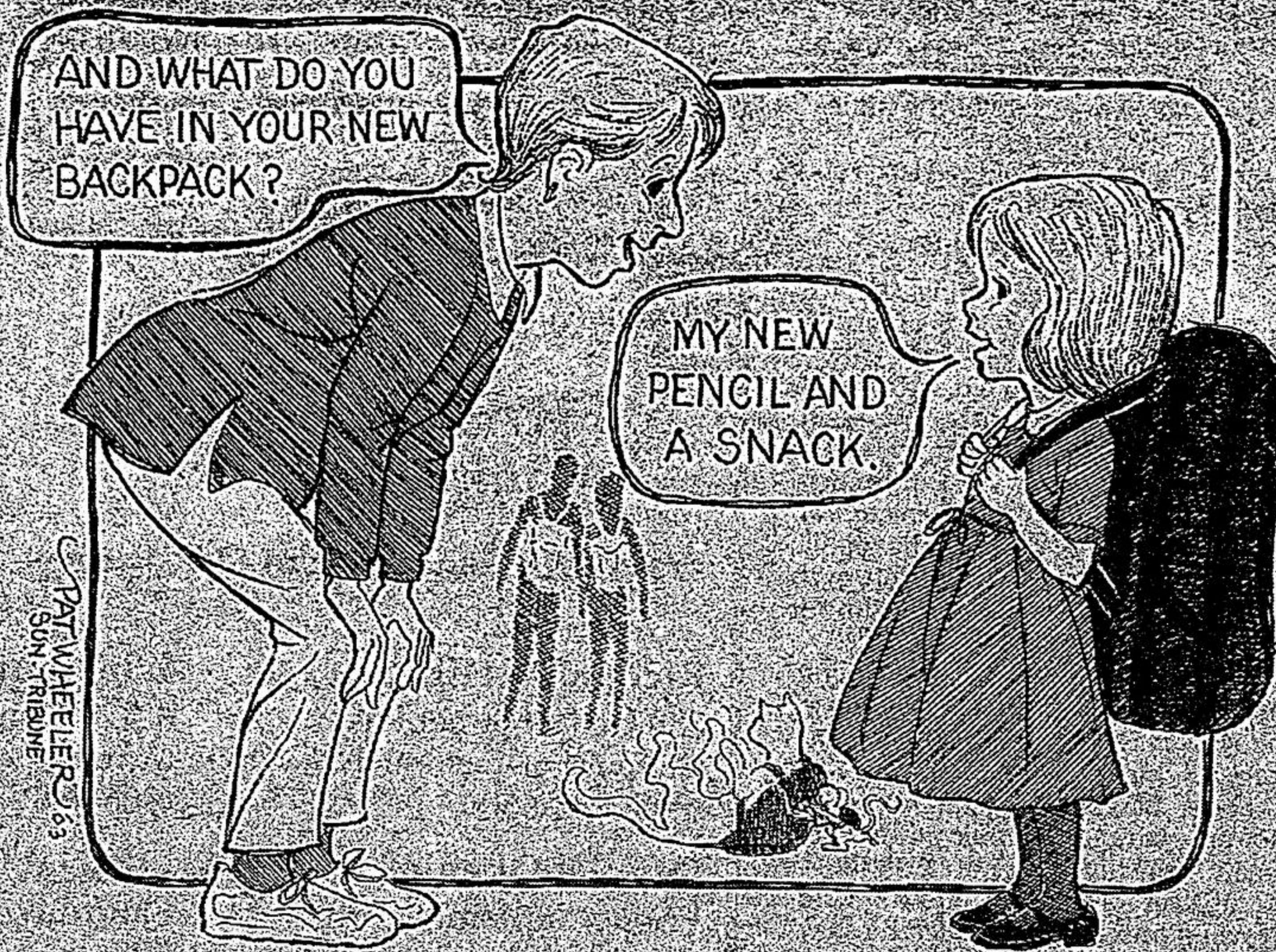
NDP leader Howard Hampton, whose party is running a distant third in the polls, launched a campaign that's about change, too, specifically booting the Tories from office.

His message for change includes keeping vital services, such as electricity, education, water, health care and auto insurance, in the hands of government.

Premier Ernie Eves, in kicking off the Tory campaign, focused on attacking Mr. McGuinty's leadership abilities rather than address any specific issue.

His priority is cutting taxes — the same platform that first swept his party into office under Mike Harris eight years ago. Bottom line, by focusing on tax cuts once again, the Tories are appealing to our baser instincts. But we sold our souls, basically, for the price of a cup of coffee.

We've figured out tax cuts don't pay for themselves, whatever the Tories claim. Because in York Region, we've seen the deep, damaging impact of those cuts. Let's keep that in mind Oct. 2.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

About Schmidt, Doris and putting something back

"There's a thin line between Saturday night and Sunday morning."

—Jimmy Buffett, *Fruitcakes*
 Hey, I'm no movie guy but *About Schmidt* isn't your normal Jack Nicholson macho fare, is it?

Jack plays Warren R. Schmidt, who, after retiring from a Nebraska insurance company, realizes he hasn't contributed diddly to his family, let alone society.

As I watched it, I realized it ain't Five Easy Pieces, *The Last Detail* or *The Shining*.

The next morning, at a joint service of Stouffville United and St. James Presbyterian churches in Stouffville, Doris Harvey sang "I Want to Put Something Back Before I Go."

Coincidence? The segue was seamless.

I'm thinking message from God here. Big time. Flashing, highway-sized neon signs. It's like Warren Schmidt was sitting in the back pew grinning.

And Warren and Doris' timing couldn't be better. It's September, in case you wondered why all those kids were walking the streets every morning and the days were getting smaller.

It's prime time to put something back. Many folks already do and they should be thanked. They deliver meals to seniors, coach hockey, drive cancer patients to hospitals and act as Big Brothers.

Fall is a time for renewal. People get back to the routine of school, work and social calendars. Is there room in that day-timer to volunteer, to put something back?

When I was a kid, my route to school took me past the coolest yard in my home town. Lawn ornaments, humorous rocks and finely sculpted shrubs dotted a lawn that looked like it had been transplanted from Augusta National.

The retired homeowner with the permanent tan was always somewhere on the lawn. Raking, clipping or pruning. I don't think he put anything back; he didn't have time between the fertilizing, de-fungizing and mulching.

That was a shame. Hopefully, I won't ruin it for you, but in *About Schmidt*, Warren eventually gets it. He puts something back.

How about the rest of us? It's never too late.

Jim Mason is editor of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Town councillor correct on environmental issues

I have been disturbed to see two very serious complaints against Whitchurch-Stouffville council member Mark Carroll in recent issues of the paper.

The first attacked him for saying pesticides pose a danger to human health and the environment. The second slammed him for saying motor boats contribute to water quality problems at Musselman's Lake.

I believe Mark is right on both issues. The scientific evidence continues to mount on the dangers of pesticides. They have even been found on the highest glacier in Alberta's Rocky Mountains. So much for those who say they disappear within a couple of days of being applied to lawns.

Concerning motor boats, Mark has drawn a very reasonable conclusion in saying they are contributing to problems at Musselman's Lake. Gas-powered motorcraft are not allowed at Preston Lake precisely because of the damage they can cause to small and shallow kettle lakes.

I would like to recognize Mark for the consistent positions he has taken over the years in defence of the environment. Our council needs the environmental conscience he provides.

Although Preston Lake is not in his ward, he has been a strong supporter of our efforts to keep the lake healthy and has been instrumental in bringing recognition and grant money to our community.

CLYDE SMITH
 PRESIDENT, PRIDE & PRESTON LAKE
 WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5 e-mail: jmason@yrmg.com

Thomas wrong on gay marriage

Re: *Blessing the union of Adam and Steve*, July 31, *Sun-Tribune* column

The Ontario Court of Appeal ruled June 10 same-sex couples had the constitutionally protected right to civil marriage and the debate has raged back and forth through our communities ever since.

I have followed these debates, and have seen many different options; however, few of them disturbed me as much as Jim Thomas' column. His contention that this decision relates to the future of the "Missionary Church" is quite simply misinformed. No one is suggesting churches perform ceremonies for anyone they do not wish to.

Mr. Thomas refers to his homosexual friends as "as normal as you or I." What did you expect, sir?

Rev. Geense points out, "Canada is no longer a Christian nation." I agree. We who support this legislation, gay and straight, are not, as Rev. Geense suggests, militants bent on having our demands made law. We are citizens, asking only for the rights already granted to our fellow citizens under the law, but only recently delivered.

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 A Metroland Community Newspaper

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Classified: 1-800-743-3353 • Distribution: 905-294-8244

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