



15 Picnics can be elaborate or a few sandwiches in a basket

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Keep gas tax promise, Grits told

Urban agenda key for minority government

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

If Paul Martin's minority government fails to keep its gas tax pledge, we'll be going to the polls again in six months, York Region chairperson Bill Fisch predicts.

"One of their key promises was an urban agenda; that money would flow to municipalities for infrastructure," Mr. Fisch said Thursday.

"Not to move forward on this would be devastating for them; it means the minority government would come to an end."

Mr. Fisch pointed to a unanimous resolution Tuesday from the Greater Toronto Area mayors and regional chairpersons calling on Ottawa to speed up its promise of five cents per litre of the federal fuel tax over the government's term of office.

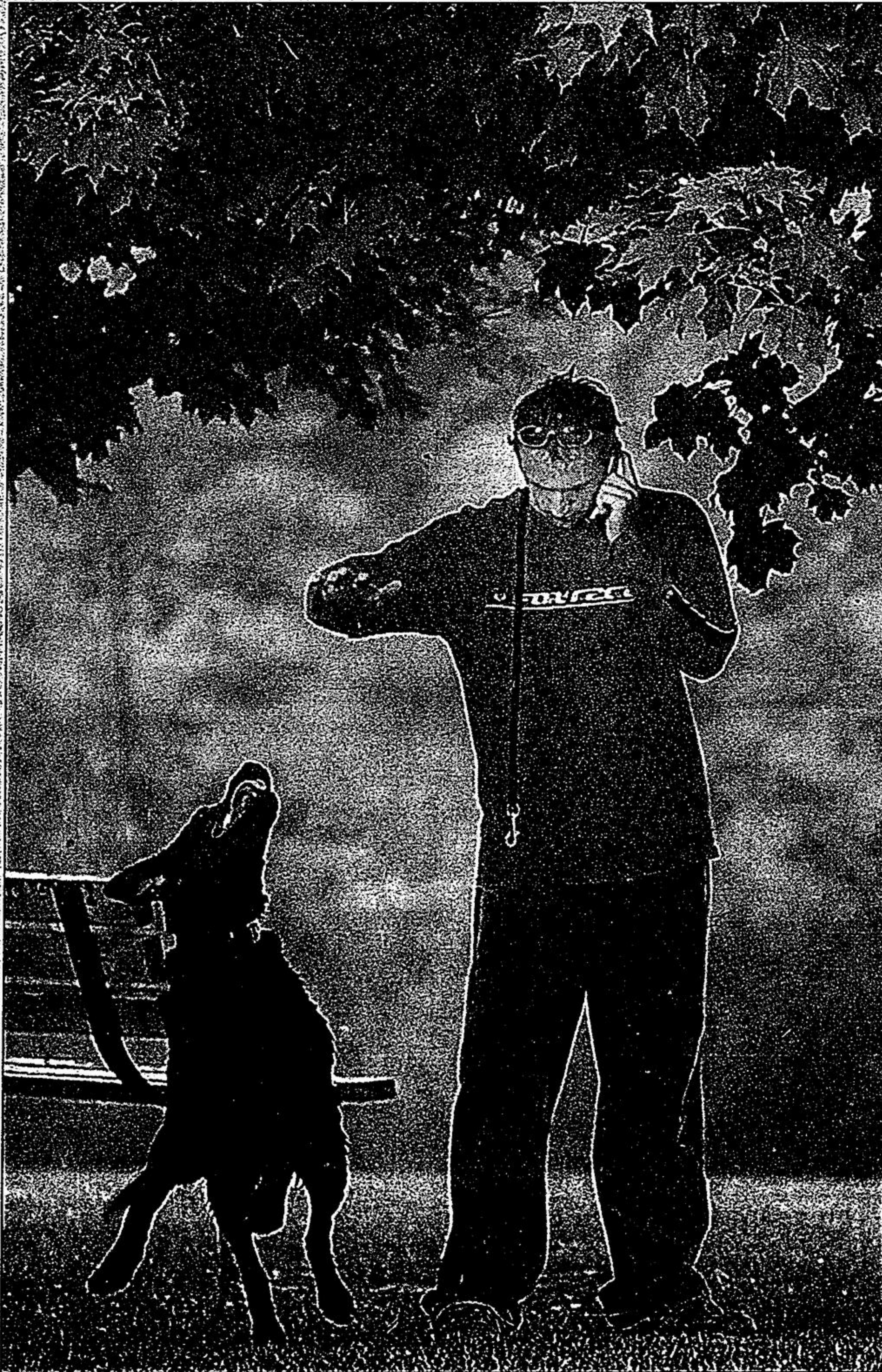
"There's been a lot of talk about giving us the money but not enough action, not enough dollars. We expect to see some of this money at least by 2005, if not 2004 in our area — where (the Liberals) got their strong support," he said.

Mr. Fisch pointed out the NDP also had a strong urban agenda and suggested the Conservatives will probably move in that direction, too.

They were the only one of the three major parties not to push for the gas tax and that was one

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Rompin' in the rain



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Lucas Mast ducks beneath a tree at Stouffville Reservoir Park to make a call during a short summer shower while his dog, Chopper, a seven-month-old black lab cross, wants to play.

STAKES HIGH IN SEWER BATTLE

York Region hires former Chretien adviser

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

York Region is using high-powered lobbyists, including a past adviser to Jean Chretien, to persuade Ottawa and Queen's Park they must let crucial sewer work continue in Markham.

York hired a firm headed by Warren Kinsella, a former special assistant to Mr. Chretien, regional chairperson Bill Fisch confirmed this week.

But Mr. Fisch said Mr. Kinsella's firm, Navigator PPG, whose team also includes former senior advisors to federal and provincial cabinet ministers, is simply another consultant to the region, which is hoping for necessary approvals in a few weeks.

"As in the past, we've hired government relations people to get people the right message at the right time. That's one way of doing it," Mr. Fisch said.

The stakes could hardly be higher. Citing environmental concerns, federal and provincial agencies have held up a key Markham link in the York Durham Sewer System for a year, delaying major developments as far north as Queensville.

Calling for an environmental review, which would indefinitely stop home construction worth billions of dollars, environmentalists argue completing the pipe will drain the Rouge River.

Mr. Kinsella told The Sun-Tribune the region must convince Federal Fisheries Department

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