

OPINION

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Editorial

Political games sideline reform

Once again, political wrangling threatens to derail attempts to improve Canada's ailing health care system.

The country's premiers want Ottawa to take over funding for prescription drugs, arguing this would free up more provincial money to recruit and train much-needed doctors and nurses.

Prime Minister Paul Martin, on the other hand, says shifting the overall cost of drug purchasing to Ottawa would be much too costly.

He said he would prefer to pay only for a catastrophic drug program, for patients who need expensive medications but can't afford them.

Here we go again, it seems.

Once again, the focus of fixing our universal health care system is being sidelined by political games, where each side wants the other to pay the bills.

Politicians have lost focus on the real issues that need to be addressed: Canadians aren't getting the care they need when they need it because there aren't enough professionals and equipment.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates almost 1,600 doctors are needed immediately to care for the more than one million residents across the province who don't have a family physician.

Bickering over who will pay for drugs is not going to make this problem go away.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty says a national pharmacare plan coupled with his health care tax hike will allow the province to concentrate on bringing trained medical staff here.

Yet, the health care premiums introduced earlier this year have been criticized by former Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow's commission.

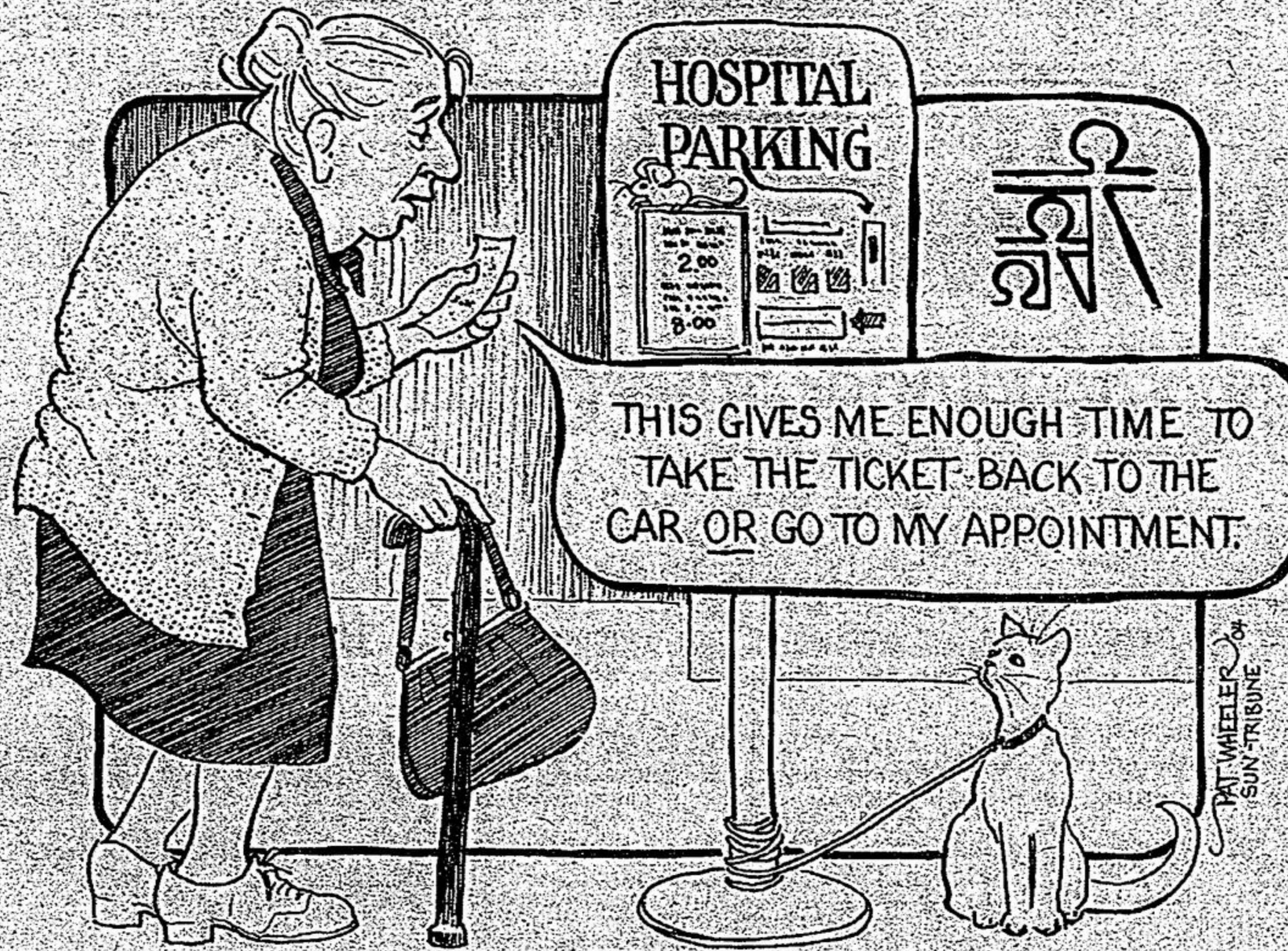
There are plenty of other ways the premier could reform medicare in his own backyard. If the province wants to reduce waiting lines for treatment and free up doctors, perhaps it should focus more on prevention.

The bottom line is Ottawa and the premiers need to come up with reform plans that will benefit all Canadians through a streamlined, cost-efficient system.

God knows the money is in their hands; taxpayers can attest to that.

Canadians don't much care which level of government funds what part of the system; it's all the same taxpayer footing the bill, after all.

They just want the system fixed.



Letters to the Editor

Smaller lots on Rose Avenue 'tip of development iceberg'

The fields are being scraped and the flowers are gone as developers prepare for their subdivisions.

Not satisfied with 9,000 houses, they are already looking at larger lots in the older part of town. My home at 128 Rose Ave. is now in danger of becoming part of a mini subdivision of five identical houses, all in a row with a row of garages.

Contrary to the precepts of Whitchurch-Stouffville's secondary plan to protect our 'unique small town country character', our planning department appears to be facilitating the generic replacement of older houses.

In my case, the developer wishes to flank the main house with two identical houses on 40-foot lots, thus opening up the possibility of another three houses where the main house stands.

Our planning department could facilitate this by accepting a dedication of land for a walk-through in exchange for allowing 40-foot lots.

The neighbourhood has not been informed either of the proposed walk-through or the downsizing from 55 to 40-foot lots. Few understood the implication of the announcement from the committee of adjustment.

Through the combined efforts of Councillor Robert Hargrave, our mayor, numerous individuals and the whole neighbourhood (once informed) we managed to delay the committee of adjustment meeting and have this brought up for discussion at the Aug. 24 council meeting.

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@ymg.com

"New subdivisions abutting existing residences are to be compatible in height and density," according to the town.

The residents of the south side of Rose Avenue negotiated and thought they got a lot frontage of 55 feet to correspond with our minimum existing frontage in 2003.

For a 40-foot frontage to now be acceptable is, in my opinion, irresponsible and reprehensible. Why is it we have to protect ourselves from our own employees? They should work in our best interests, not the interests of an oversized industry hungry for business.

As this issue will affect many residents of the older, unique part of town in the days ahead, this meeting will give you an opportunity to address your concerns to council. So please come Aug. 24 at 7 p.m.

We need to save our unique small town character from the generic stamp of mass development and it has to be done now. This is the tip of the iceberg.

RANDY MOLE
STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Like father, like son on Crime Stoppers TV reports

A proud Wayne Snooks is looking down smiling.

The veteran cop died in 1998 following a lengthy battle with cancer. His funeral packed a Markham church.

For the three years before his death, the Whitchurch-Stouffville resident was the face and voice of the Crime Stoppers program in York Region.

Now, his son, Todd Snooks, is doing the same job as co-ordinator of crime-fighting program across the region.

Todd, 32, didn't set out to follow in his dad's shoes. The Stouffville District Secondary School grad and former Stouffville Sun carrier was hired as a constable in Peel Region in 1997.

MOVED TO YORK REGION

He moved to York two years later and had been patrolling the streets of Richmond Hill until joining Crime Stoppers in May.

"The job was one of the last things I applied for; it's just something that came up," said the married father of two boys who lives in Uxbridge.

"But there's definitely the aspect here of who my dad was and the fact that he was so well liked."

Todd appears weekly on Rogers TV and The New VR, as well as CFRB radio, asking for new tips on old crimes. He can't talk about specific cases — anonymity is the cornerstone of the program — but says there are numerous success stories locally and provincially.

PRaise for Directors

His dad may have talked about Crime Stoppers around the dinner table, but Todd wasn't aware of how much the 16 members of the community board of directors did for the program. He's impressed.

"I have a very wide base of interests," said Todd, a member of the York police 'dive team' when not at the Crime Stoppers office.

"And with policing, there is so much to do within it. This is another (of those jobs)."

Dad is smiling.

Jim Mason is editor of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

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