

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Province should treat York like T.O.

At what point is a municipality big enough to make its own decisions? As a joint provincial/municipal task force reviews the City of Toronto Act with the view of extending broader powers to Ontario's capital, it's a question York politicians should be asking. While the province won't allow Toronto to levy general sales or income taxes, it has agreed to allow taxes for certain services, such as a hotel rooms, to boost city coffers.

The phrase "fiscally sustainable, autonomous and accountable" is touted often in the media and in government circles when describing what this revamp is intended to achieve. Is this not what we want for York Region, a community outpacing Toronto in growth?

What makes Toronto so special, especially when, according to a report last month from the Canadian Urban Institute, higher taxes and traffic congestion threaten to make Toronto a bedroom community for the 905 region?

During the past seven years, just seven new high-quality office buildings have been built in Toronto, compared to 102 in the 905 area, the report says, before calling for a levelling of the playing field when it comes to taxes.

Sounds good, but why stop there?

Couldn't Vaughan or Markham also use the "new political and financial tools" being proposed for Toronto?

After all, they share a combined population of more than 400,000 people and many of the same economic, transportation and social issues.

Critics may say granting "city" powers to suburban municipalities such as York would be dangerous given the tendency to promote fiefdoms and self-interest over big picture thinking. But as the song goes, the times, they are a changin'.

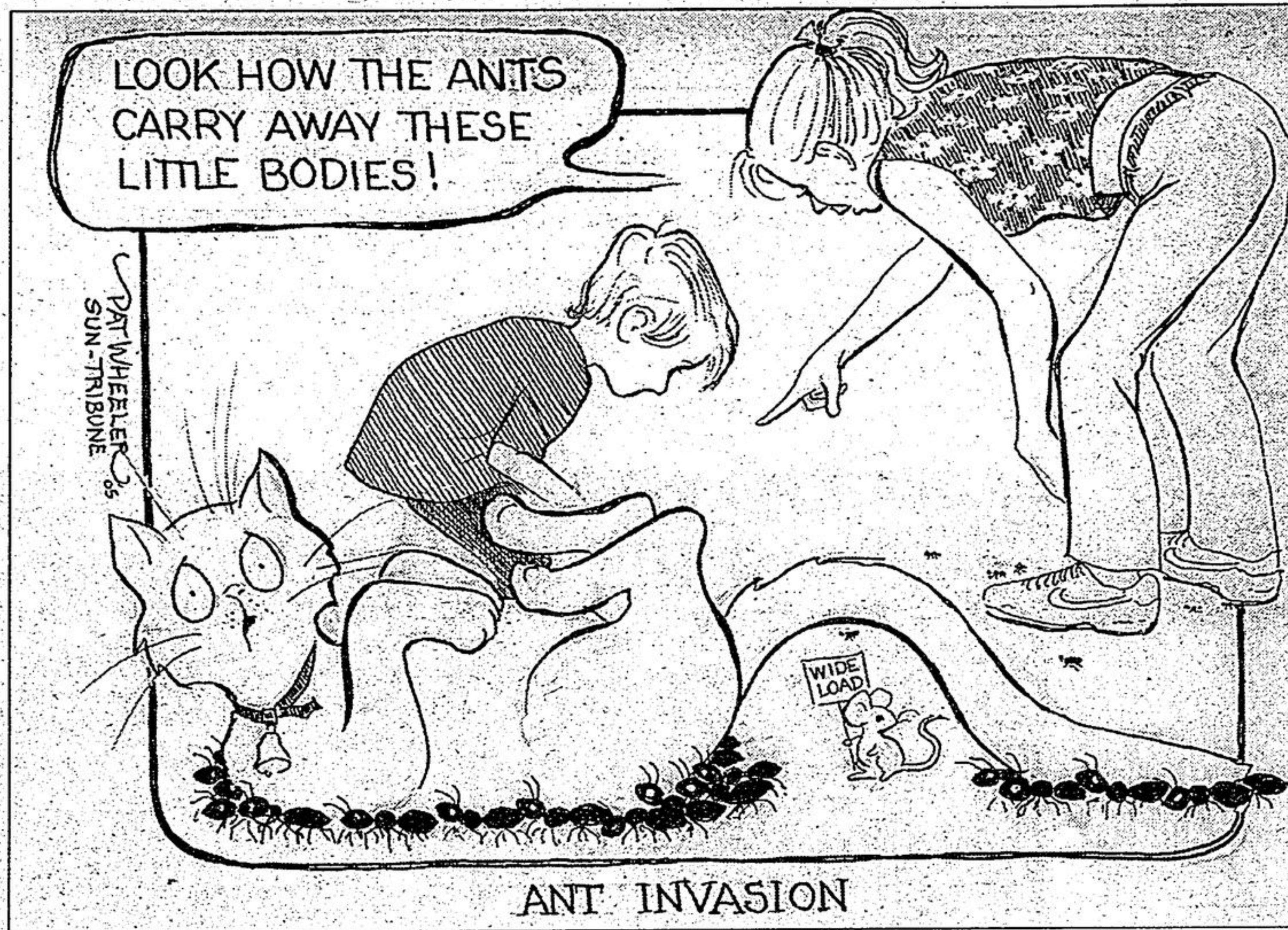
Just look at the actions of a trio of local councillors, serving three municipalities, who have banded together to oppose construction of a sewer along 19th Avenue.

"Protecting our water and air are crucial and I think that transcends any particular political boundaries or sphere of jurisdiction," said Richmond Hill Councillor Elio Di Iorio, who has teamed up with other municipal politicians to look at the bigger picture.

Not a hint of parochialism there.

The purpose of revamping the City of Toronto Act is to make Toronto more fiscally sustainable and autonomous and provide it with the tools it needs to thrive in the global economy.

All large municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, including in York Region, would and should benefit from such measures, as well.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Grand old gal takes in another championship

She's quirky, she's weathered and she's a throwback, but we love her madly.

The grandstand in Memorial Park is one of those landmarks that says Stouffville. Put the clock tower, our kettle lakes and Main Street West's web of traffic lights on that list, too.

But back to the ball park. The grandstand and the main diamond it sits over are everything SkyDome isn't.

Main diamond: open air 24/7, grass that grows, free admission, plenty of parking, zero concrete, concessions that don't require a line of credit and trees.

SkyDome: none of the above, although that roof would be handy a few days every summer.

Stouffville's diamond doesn't have World Series banners flying in the outfield, but it's seen more championships than Yankee Stadium.

The latest came Sunday in the most dramatic of fashions. The Stouffville peewee Storm softball team captured the Ontario Elimination tournament with equal splashes of rope-a-dope and cardiac comeback in the mix.

A last-inning semifinal win Saturday was followed by a stinker of a loss to the same Napanee Express team the next morning. The mercy gods called it after six innings at 13-3. It was uglier than one of those starminus-their makeup TV shows.

Past the right field foul pole, some parishioners were praying for an early end to the Strawberry Festival church service or a second final in their beloved ball tournament. They got their wish.

Stouffville came off the ropes late in the last game, scored the winning run on a bases-loaded walk then struck out a batter from Avril Lavigne country with the bases jammed again for the title.

It was as magical as Joe Carter's "touch-them-all" blast in 1993. The fans rocked the stands while the players high-fived and hugged the way only 14-year-old boys can.

While talk of gutting the park with roadways and moving ball diamonds continues, another championship was added to the chronicles.

The storied grandstand nodded in approval.

No flashy outfield banners required.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

Letters to the Editor

Why pour toxins on lawns when air is already a mess?

Re: Battle brewing over pesticide law, story, and Toxic products add to our chemical burden, column, June 25.

That was an interesting pair of pieces in your newspaper. First, Joan Ransberry described the looming conflict between Markham's environmentalists and the pesticide business.

Overleaf, on the Opinion page, you positioned David Suzuki's column about our growing chemical burden. I hope most readers perused both pieces carefully.

The pesticide lobby is very well financed by the chemical giants and spreads around huge amounts of money to defend its business interests every year.

Is the protection we receive from some levels of government compromised by this concerted effort? I certainly think so.

Had you published another article about our ever-more-frequent smog days, it would have created a perfect trilogy.

Why, with so much junk in the air already, would anyone want to spray deadly toxins into the mixture purely for cosmetic purposes?

The annual toll of people succumbing to the effects of bad air is terrifying and growing.

More and more children become victims of breathing diseases such as asthma with each passing month. Most researchers credit bad air for the increases in these illnesses and the rising death toll from lung disorders.

The pesticide lobby does not make a good case. We are not at risk from dandelions. There are more jobs required when caring for landscapes in an environmentally friendly fashion than when using pesticides.

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@yrng.com

Toronto's council deserves credit for facing down the pesticide industry groups and Markham council should do the same.

GLEN E. MOREHOUSE
 WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

All drivers need to share road

Re: Motorcycles need safety apparatus, letter, June 9.

I think there is a very critical point the writer fails to point out. All drivers need to drive safely and share the road. According to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, approximately two-thirds of accidents involving a motorcycle were caused by the other driver violating the motorcyclist's right-of-way.

Therefore, it is not fair to make a blanket statement that motorcycles are the problem, but recognize that everyone on the road, particularly automobile drivers, need to drive safely.

The number of people dying on the road is increasing. In York Region, there have been four motorcycle deaths and 17 in automobiles in 2005.

I agree, if speed limits, safety features and noise levels were changed, fewer accidents would happen and the road would be a safer place for everyone.

YUSUF PATEL
 UNIONVILLE

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