

OPINION

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Editorial

Banning faith-based arbitration brave

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's decision against enshrining faith-based arbitration in law is the right move.

It's a courageous decision sure to draw a backlash from proponents.

While a report from former NDP attorney general Marion Boyd recommended the province allow and regulate Islamic arbitration much the same way it does Christian, Jewish and Ismaili tribunals, doing so would break a fundamental principle of Canadian law.

Everyone should be viewed as equal under the law. Providing a separate set of rules for residents because of their faith would fly in the face of this fundamental fact.

While some might criticize the move as an attack on their faith, choosing not to recognize arbitration as law doesn't undermine the practice's intent.

People will still be able to turn to their priest, imam or rabbi for counselling. The only difference is that these recommendations won't be binding.

"Ontarians will always have the right to seek advice from anyone in matters of family law, including religious advice," Mr. McGuinty told the Canadian Press.

"But no longer will religious arbitration be deciding matters of family law."

It also doesn't mean Ontario is any less supportive of multiculturalism, something on which we can continue to pride ourselves.

Granted, the announcement could have been handled better.

It has been nine months since the Boyd report was filed, which gave Mr. McGuinty plenty of time to consult with affected groups.

Instead, it appears everyone was caught off guard by the news, provided to a reporter over the weekend.

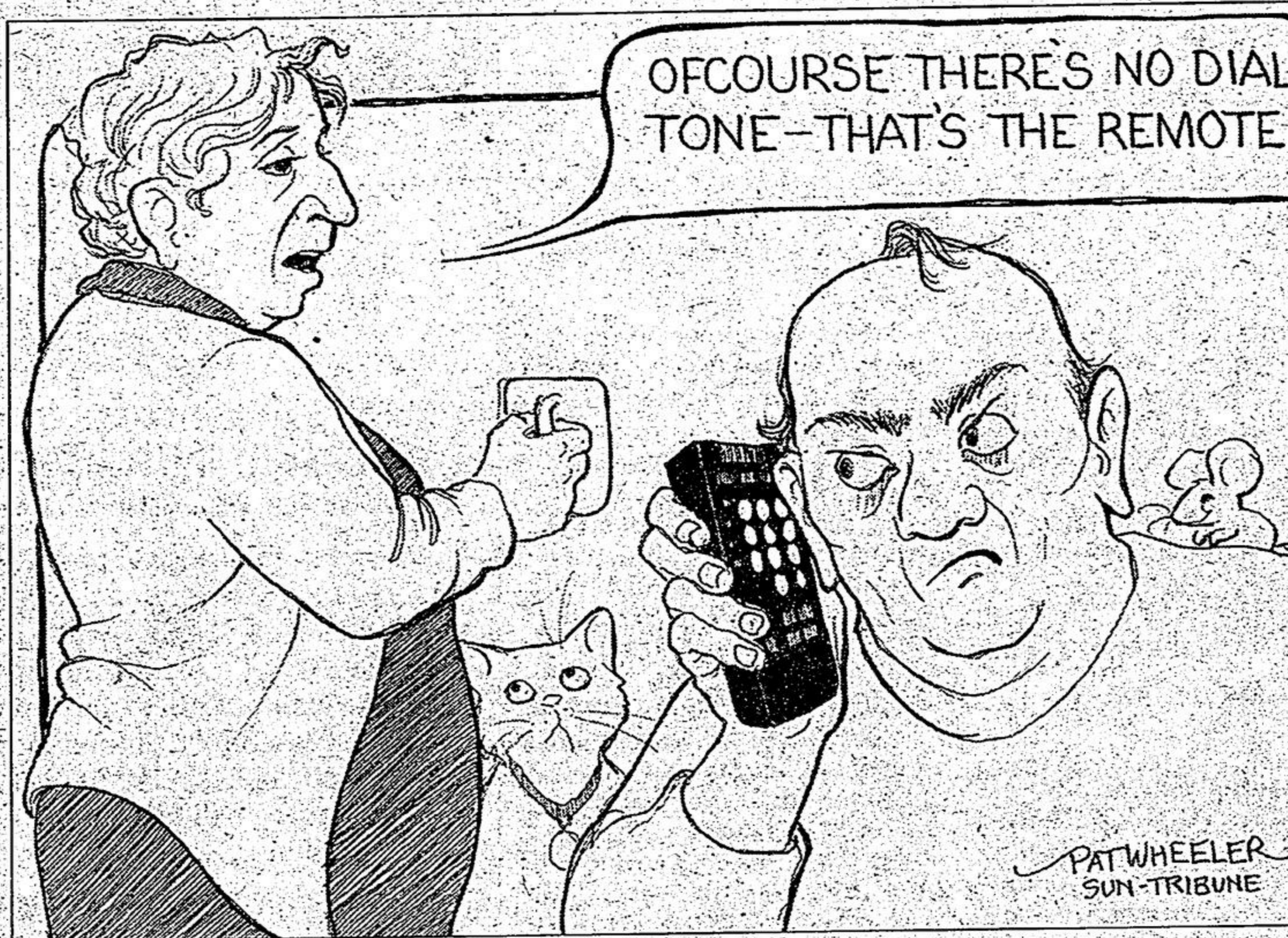
While backing the move, Conservative Leader John Tory said it was "incompetent management on a sensitive issue."

"Simple courtesy would suggest that women's groups and religious leaders might have been given a heads-up on such a sensitive issue," he added.

And the province still has work to do. Saying everyone is equal under the law is one thing, but it only works if everyone has equal access, regardless of education and one's financial position.

And let's not forget arbitration was introduced to take some of the pressure off the province's family court system.

This move must be followed by hiring more judges and providing better access to the system in a more timely manner.



Letters to the Editor

Don't ignore school crossing stop sign, Whitchurch-Stouffville motorists

September is here and with September comes school. As we set out each morning, we are all in our own mindset of what we need to accomplish before the day is through.

As a crossing guard, one of my priorities is to ensure the children can cross the street without being harmed.

In my first week, I have already witnessed several drivers ignoring the stop sign I hold. Inconsiderate? Uneducated? Half asleep? I'm not sure.

Skimming past the children and myself on the walkway to get to their destination, one driver almost hit me. (Yes, I do remember her, her car and the plate number.)

I have chosen to voice my concerns here rather than reporting them to the police since some of you may not be educated with regards to our stop sign.

Please be advised the stop sign actually means stop and there are no exceptions.

Pedestrians have the right of way when crossing the street.

Please be proactive. When you are rushing to do your thing, please respect others.

A traffic light takes less than a minute of your patience.

The stop signs stays up until the children's feet are on the curb on the other side of the street, so please stop and obey the sign.

Thanking you in advance.

STEPHANIE CHRISTINE VLACHOS
 CROSSING GUARD
 NINTH LINE AND MILLARD STREET, 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

It's just a game, hockey parents

"How come my child isn't playing in the NHL yet?" I'll tell you why. It's because they didn't make the local minor hockey rep team and that's OK.

Why do we, as parents, assume the coach has made a mistake when it comes to our child? I ponder this question every year at this time.

I'm not saying coaches don't make mistakes or misjudge players at times. But if your child is that good, they will notice them in due time. I also know we all want the best for our children, but a little disappointment in everyone life's just makes them that much stronger.

Did you know that in Stouffville minor hockey, as in many hockey centres, the people who apply to coach a team have taken courses in hockey development, skills, abuse prevention, first aid and coaching? They also have to go through an interview process in front of a selection board.

All this just to coach your children and they do that for free. So the next time your sons or daughters didn't make the team, just remember it's just a game and games are supposed to be fun. Let your children have fun at whatever level they play. Hockey just a game and, boy, do we love it in Stouffville.

MICHAEL HUMPHREYS
 PRESIDENT
 WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE MINOR HOCKEY



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

In praise of the greatest Canadian

With apologies to Tommy Douglas and his fans, the father of socialized medicine in this country is not the greatest Canadian of all time.

Sorry, despite what the voters on the CBC website may say, the nod must unofficially go to Terry Fox.

Hands down. No questions asked. Even if the politicians who succeeded Mr. Douglass hadn't run our medicare system into the ground, my vote stays with Terry.

He wasn't a paid politician but a simple young man with high ideals and an unbelievable work ethic. His goal was simple; to raise money to find cures for cancer.

We all know the story, thankfully taught in school textbooks in this country. It's about an average guy who ran a marathon a day for more than three months on one leg.

He could not finish his run, however, as the cancer spread to his lungs and he was forced to abandon the course Sept. 1, 1980, just east of Thunder Bay after running 5,373 kilometres over 143 straight days across eastern Canada.

I was a cub reporter working for a newspaper in my home town of Thunder Bay 25 years ago this month. En route to another assignment, I stumbled upon an obviously hastily called news conference assembling in the middle of a street between a general hospital and the region cancer clinic.

Before even seeing Terry or his dad, Rolly, I knew it had to be Terry. He had been ducking the public and press by staying on the opposite side of the city from the hotel he was "booked" into. There had been a lull in the public relations machine around the run.

There he lay, on a stretcher in the middle of the street, trying to stay and look strong.

Terry Fox Runs around the world, have raised more than \$360 million for cancer research. The 25th annual goes this Sunday, including Stouffville's event.

Several Whitchurch-Stouffville schools will take part in the new national school run day Friday.

We don't celebrate a lot of heroes in this land. Pierre Trudeau had his moments. Maybe Roberta Bondar. Paul Henderson, too, but that's just sport.

Terry Fox competed in the real world, twice battling the cancer that would eventually kill him at age 22.

The least we can do is take part in his run once a year or sponsor someone else in it.

The greatest Canadian ever is looking down upon us.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

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