

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Liberals still have long way to go

Sunday marked the second anniversary of the McGuinty Liberals' election. Party heavyweights are, no doubt, putting the finishing touches on the throne speech, which will be read next week.

Is there reason to celebrate in Ontario at the unofficial halfway point of the Liberals' term?

Not according to Conservative Leader John Tory, who says Ontarians have paid more than \$2,000 more each in taxes, fees and electricity costs since the Liberals came to power.

Premier Dalton McGuinty has "under-delivered" and is "in over his head", Mr. Tory says.

The freeze on post-secondary tuition fees is about to expire, much to the dismay of students who have flooded back to Ontario's colleges and universities.

Energy costs are expected to go through the roof this winter.

The uneven performance of the Canadian dollar, those looming energy fee hikes and the shakier American economy, to which we are so tied make him nervous.

But despite Mr. Tory's predictable gloomy message, there is good news in Ontario. The deficit is smaller than the Liberals predicted.

The Liberals are spending money where people need it spent, for the most part. That includes an announcement this week the province will spend \$2.2 million in York Region for additional surgeries and MRI exams to reduce waiting lists and \$1.87 million more for palliative care.

The Liberals have also pumped money into the region's three hospitals.

If it isn't the health care system, Ontarians want money spent in their schools. Mr. McGuinty promised to reduce class sizes to 20 students by 2007.

The premier said there will be even more money for education in next week's throne speech.

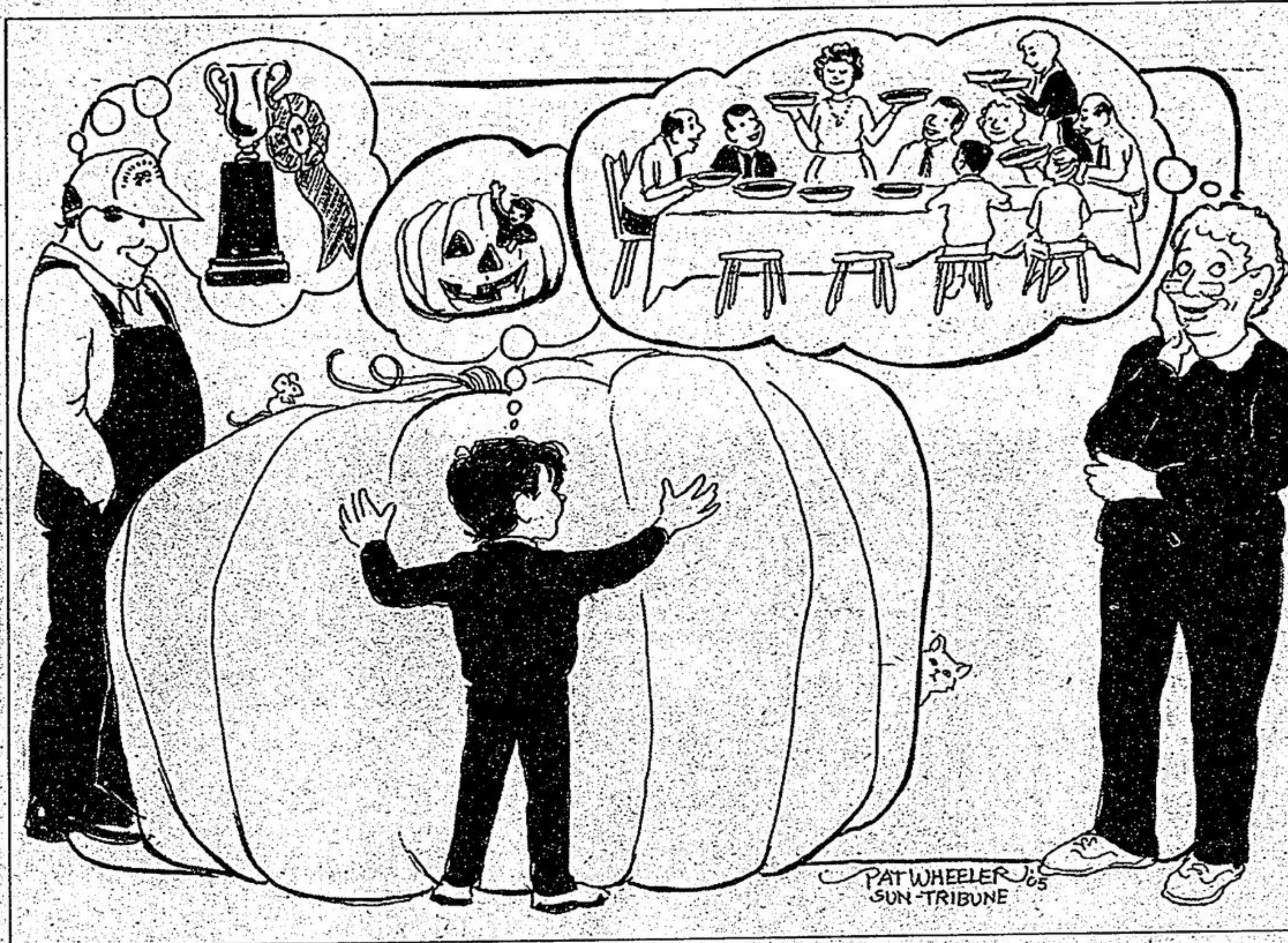
The message to McGuinty Liberals is to keep pecking away at improving schools and hospitals, the largest concerns in York and across Ontario.

Mr. McGuinty also promised to put the clamps on suburban sprawl and allow growth only around existing population centres in southern Ontario.

Although he delivered an Oak Ridges Moraine protection policy and a green-belt plan, there's little evidence it is making a difference. There's more work in this area of the province to be done on the growing traffic problems, too.

Are Ontarians better off two years into Dalton McGuinty's term?

Yes, but there's a long way to go.



Letters to the Editor

Region should assign value to water being wasted

Re: Big Pipe expansion harmless, York Region says, Sept. 29.

This expansion is anything but harmless. One hundred per cent of the residents of my ward are dependent on private wells for their water.

Over the last 18 months, at least 11 property owners in my ward, including two farmers with herds of cattle, have lost all or almost all of their water supply, requiring them to spend money to drill deeper wells.

York Region claims this has nothing to do with its de-watering for the Big Pipe.

Something is depleting the aquifers and residents in my ward are becoming increasingly worried.

In my opinion, the region has made disturbing assumptions in its evaluations of alternatives for constructing the Big Pipe.

It has assumed there is an unlimited supply of groundwater and the value of the water being wasted is zero.

Water is a precious and finite resource, not to be wasted. De-watering is not only causing damage to the natural environment, it is being lost forever as a future source of water supply for our rural and agricultural residents.

Water has value.

York Region should be assigning a value to the water being wasted and including that in any cost/benefit analysis of alternatives being considered for the Big Pipe.

A litre of water bought in a store today costs more than \$1. So, what if the value of only \$0.1 (a penny) per litre were assigned to the water

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

being wasted?

What would the cost be, based on the current rate of 20,000 litres per minute?

Per minute: 20,000 x \$0.01 = \$200

Per hour: \$200 x 60 = \$12,000

Per day: \$12,000 x 24 = \$288,000

Per month: \$288,000 x 30 = \$8.64 million

Per Year: \$8.64 million x 12 = \$103.68 million

More than \$103 million of water is being wasted per year and de-watering has been going on for several years already.

If York Region factored this amount of money (or even a fraction of it) into its analysis of alternatives, would it be building the Big Pipe the way it is or would they have adopted different technologies or different options? I would like to think so.

This situation is outrageous. A finite, precious resource is being wasted forever and our rural residents will wind up paying the price.

York Region needs to stop the de-watering and find a better way.

CLYDE SMITH

COUNCILLOR

TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Taking back our streets one walk at a time

Some folks in our midst are marking international Walk to School Week by, what else, walking to school.

It's a pretty simple concept: hoof it to school with the children to demonstrate the physical benefits of exercise while, at the same time, taking back your neighbourhood from whatever evil forces may lurk in the cul-de-sac.

It will be a far cry from the scene at most elementary, and even some high, schools on all other weekday mornings.

A parade of minivans, trucks and SUVs resembling a presidential motorcade makes the slow crawl, as short as one block, to the school parking lot where children are left in the safety of classmates and teachers.

The scene is repeated, in reverse, every afternoon.

Back in my day, a ride to school was a rare treat reserved for days of extremely nasty weather, minor illness or the delivery of oversized science fair projects.

And it wasn't just school transportation. We walked to hockey practice and rode our bikes to scouts. Parents rarely attended minor hockey games and little league baseball games.

These days, parents leave work early to play chauffeur on every road trip.

Mind you, there weren't two or three Escalades in every driveway back then. Moms stayed home to have a hot lunch on the table for you and the neighbourhood school was a heck of lot closer to everyone's home than it is today.

And we hadn't yet heard about children like Christine Jessop being abducted. Child molesters were dirty little secrets who weren't prosecuted or at least we didn't hear about them.

It's a timid new world out there, children. I'd like to say it's for the better. But amidst the iPods, digital cameras and cellphones the size of matchbooks, we've lost something money can't buy our children.

Walking them to school might bring back some of that. A 10-minute stroll has to be healthier than a two-minute drive climaxed by lining up with a bunch of other idling gas guzzlers.

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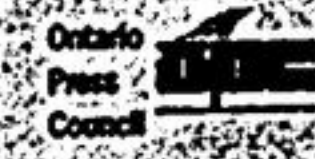
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