

Martin makes no promises on health care

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including one at an Aurora high school earlier in the day.

As for his thoughts on York Region, the prime minister said the area is vital in any bid for re-election he might have.

"York Region is one of the fastest growing dynamic regions in North America, if you are a government and you are looking ahead, then I think having your government reflect the views of an area like York Region is awfully important," Mr. Martin said.

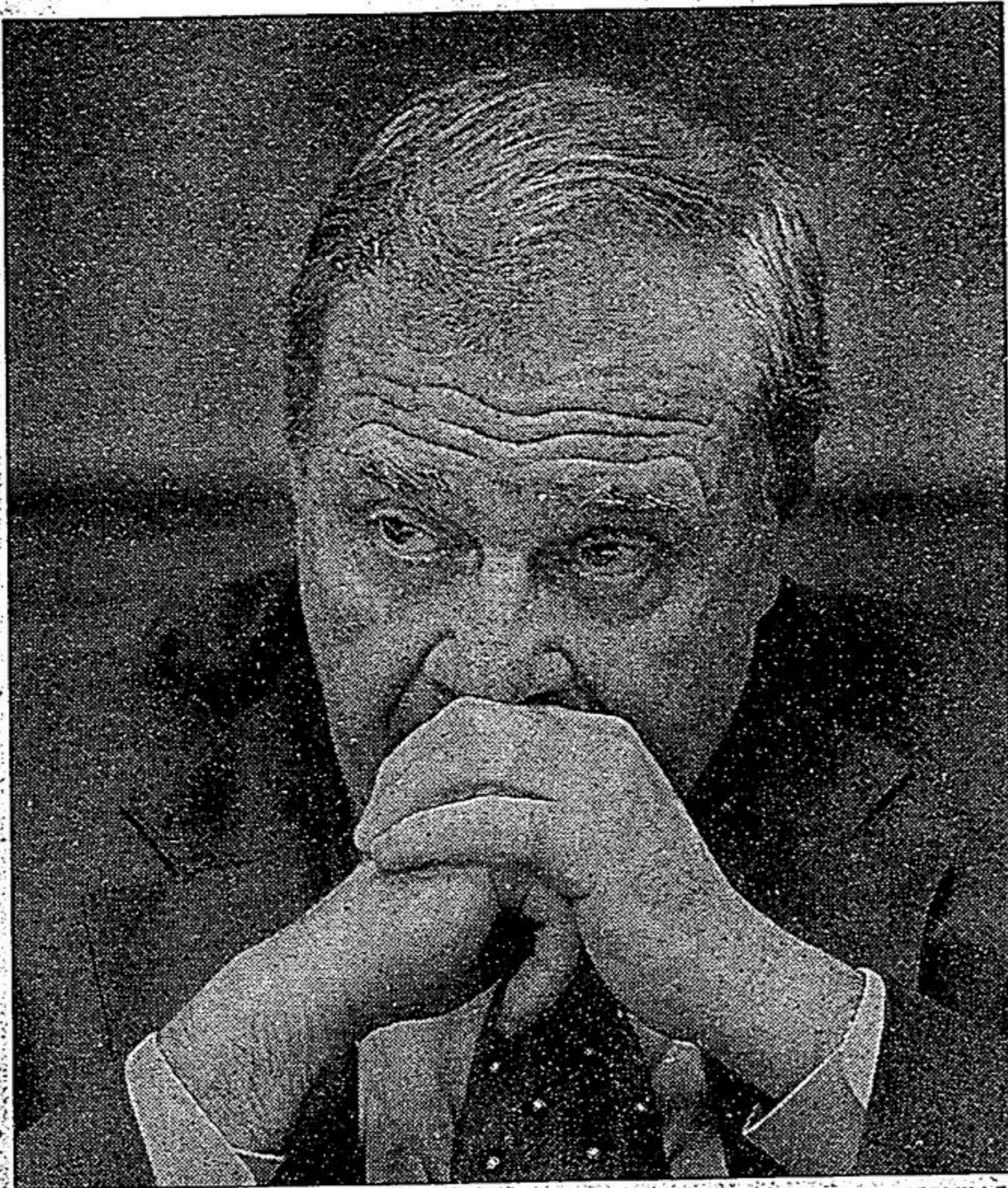
In the health care domain, the prime minister would not make any promises to help balance the inequities facing York Region residents in health care funding, throwing the ball entirely in the province's court.

A summer report released by the GTA/905 Health Care Alliance, exposed how dramatic the funding inequities are for York residents.

According to the report, York residents pay \$169 million in health care premiums but fall short in the funding they receive for acute care.

While most Ontario residents receive on average \$700, York Region residents receive about \$300.

The prime minister said once the funding is given to



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Prime Minister Paul Martin concentrates on his answers during an exclusive interview with the York Region Newspaper Group. Mr. Martin was in Newmarket to campaign with MP Belinda Stronach yesterday.

provinces, it is out of the federal government's hands how it is distributed.

Citing the \$41 million injected into health care as a result of the health care summit, Mr. Martin noted Ontario received the largest portion of

that figure.

"Once the money is given to Ontario, we don't decide the distribution," Mr. Martin explained.

The prime minister quashed the idea the federal government may institute

controls on the money given to the provinces for health care.

"We don't have the power. We can say to the provinces, you can't privatize the health care system, but when a province decides to open a hospital or close a hospital, we have no ability in that area," Mr. Martin said, adding he doesn't think Canadians want the federal government to take over the health care system.

As for the unique situation in which Newmarket-Aurora voters find themselves with local MP Belinda Stronach's defection to the Liberals in May, Mr. Martin said constituents need to focus on their beliefs.

"I think people in the riding have got to say, 'What are my values?' If anyone in the riding has their values centred around education, then Belinda is who they should vote for," Mr. Martin said.

As for the rookie Liberal's performance as Minister of Democratic Renewal and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, the prime minister only had accolades.

"Not only is she parachuted into government, but she is parachuted into one of the most important portfolios in government and she's discharged it magnificently," Mr. Martin said.

Students question prime minister on faith, trust, life

BY CAROLINE GRECH
Staff Writer

Prime Minister Paul Martin flipped the script on students at Aurora High School yesterday afternoon, asking them how they would handle some of the issues coming across his desk.

The prime minister was in York along with Aurora-Newmarket MP Belinda Stronach and dropped by the school for an hour-long question and answer period with 600 students.

Questions from students ranged from Canada's role in world, to what a day in the life of the prime minister is like.

Only one question touched on issues related to the recent release of the Gomery report, however:

Grade 10 student Lyndon Koopmans asked Mr. Martin how he plans to restore faith and trust in the government.

Working on the question with his father, they both concluded that was one of the most important ques-

tions to ask.

"The government has two choices; one is to shove it under the carpet and the other is to let it all hang out," Mr. Martin replied.

The answer left Lyndon wanting for more.

"He just said the government is trying to be honest. He could have talked about how to prevent the problems," the Grade 10 student said.

Others were impressed with how he reversed the role, asking them to answer their own questions.

Grade 10 student Brittney Stephens was taken aback when she asked the prime minister how he plans to tackle the number of Canadian jobs being lost over the softwood lumber dispute and he asked her what she thinks he should do.

Prior to the prime minister's visit, students were asked to submit questions and, based on those questions, it was decided who would get the prime minister's ear.

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