

TORY DISHES IT OUT

Grits on menu at \$500-a-plate feast

JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

More than 1,000 people paid \$500 each Wednesday to help get the big blue machine out of the red.

The Progressive Conservative fundraiser held at Thornhill's Le Parc Banquet Hall, attended by party leader John Tory and about 20 MPPs, helped put a dent in the provincial party's \$5-million debt.

When Mr. Tory took over the reigns 14 months ago, the Conservatives were \$10-million in the hole. The next provincial election is expected in 2007.

"Building a party is tough. One of my first priorities was to rebuild the party in every sense of the word — its organization, its fundraising and its moral," Mr. Tory told the partisan crowd.

"But I knew that in this party, we had the experience, the vision and the talent to provide real leadership and good government to Ontario."

Mr. Tory spent the bulk of his 20-minute speech taking shots at the Liberals, especially Premier Dalton McGuinty.

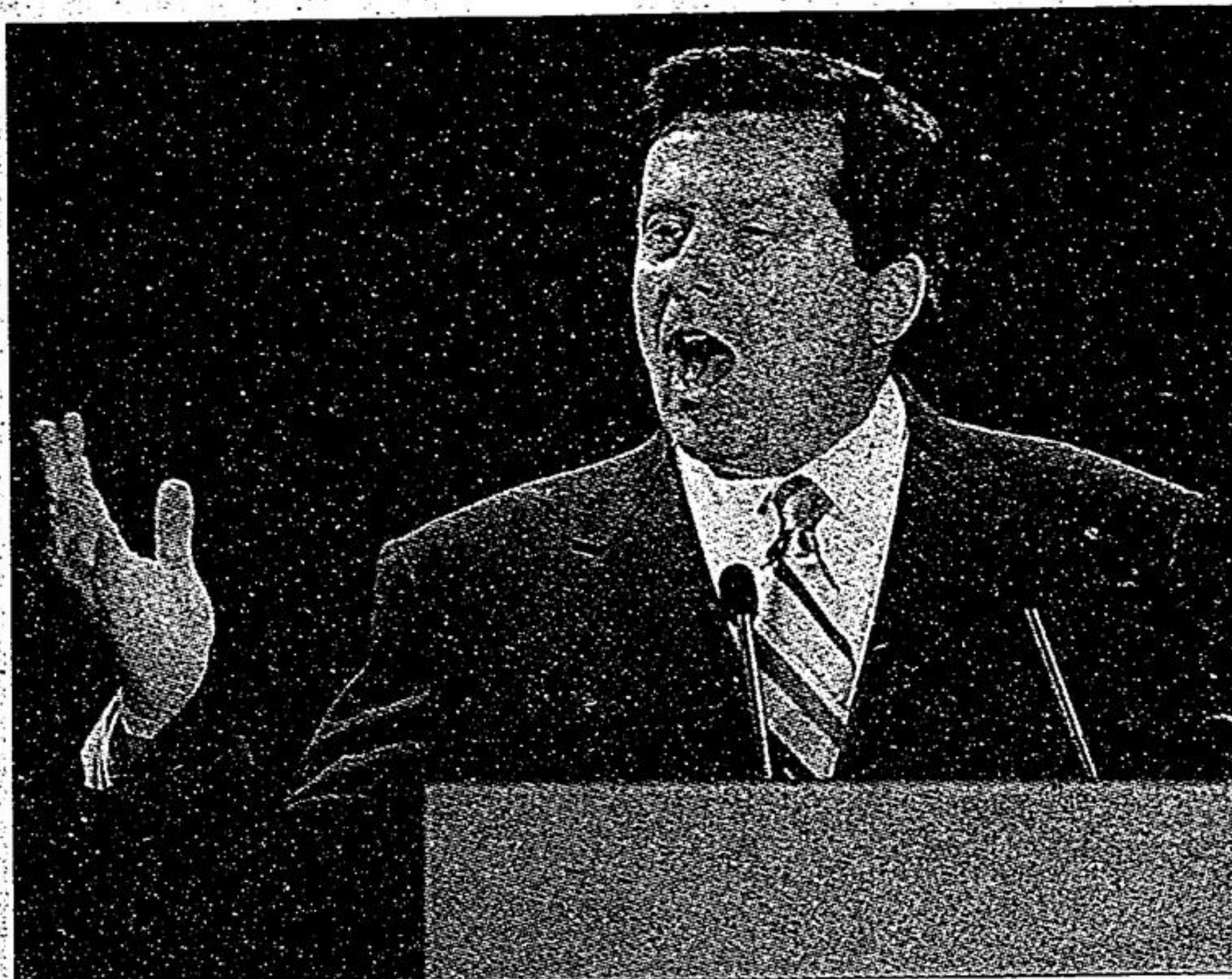
"What we see from the McGuinty Liberals time and time again is a record of blatant broken promises and an absolute refusal to take responsibility for their mistakes," Mr. Tory said.

"Even worse, they seem to look for ways to make the problems bigger. Whether through their increased taxes, their crushing regulatory burden, their growing debt or their aversion to anything other than big government. The McGuinty Liberals are sending out the wrong signals from Ontario."

Mr. Tory charged the Liberals with not understanding the relationship between high taxes, crushing regulations and the willingness to invest and create jobs.

"And they don't understand the money for health care and education comes from that investment and those jobs, not from the printing press at Queen's Park."

The party leader took issue



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Progressive Conservative leader John Tory took shots at Premier Dalton McGuinty during a fundraiser in Thornhill Wednesday that helped reduce the provincial party's \$5-million debt.

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John Tory
Progressive Conservative leader

with how the Liberals are handling gridlock, including here in York Region.

"I have pointed out to them, over and over again, that day after day, here in York Region and elsewhere, people are spending hours and hours in their cars, getting to and from work," he said.

"It's bad for the environment. It's bad for people's health and it's bad for their families. Do we see any kind of a plan emerging for transportation in a region with exploding population? Do we see the Liberals showing any leadership in getting the other governments to the table with York chairman Bill Fisch? The answer is no."

The McGuinty government is

not doing enough to fight crime and make communities safe either, Mr. Tory stressed.

"I have been in the challenged neighbourhoods," Mr. Tory said. "I sat with the community leaders, the young people, the police and others. I listened, pressed the government to act, and tried to give a voice to these troubled families and communities who often have difficulty being heard."

While Toronto experienced what became known as the summer of the gun, Mr. McGuinty's response was to ban pit bulls, Mr. Tory told the audience.

Mr. Tory called on the government to fix the justice system so a shooting suspect arrested on Friday won't be back in his neighbourhood by the weekend after being granted bail.

"Let's get our governments working together so that these kids can see there is an opportunity in front of them and that there is a choice better than gangs, gunfire and jail."

The event, co-chaired by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees, was a sell out. The Conservatives expect to garner more votes in York in the next election.

"I am in York Region two or three times a week," Mr. Tory said. "It is a very important region."

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