

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

York would benefit from youth plan

The province plans to spend as much as \$30 million over the next three years to combat Toronto's guns and gangs problem.

Dubbed the Youth Challenge Fund, Premier Dalton McGuinty has commissioned a citizens coalition to help steer youth at risk along a better path in life in 13 of the city's neediest neighbourhoods.

The province has put up an immediate injection of \$15 million — with hopes the private sector will ante-up millions more — to help combat an increasing gang problem in black communities.

If the effort is a success, York Region should press Queen's Park for a similar financial push-start in Ontario's fastest growing community.

Mr. McGuinty's Toronto effort is laudable, at least more concrete than the finger-pointing and rhetoric we've been hearing from all levels of government.

But while the money may help, ultimately, it's community involvement that will make or break the initiative, as pointed out by spokesperson for the effort, Toronto Argonauts coach Mike "Pinball" Clemons. And that's exactly why such a program could work in York Region, provided we get employers on board.

While it's true York hasn't experienced the same level of violent crime, 52 gun homicides Toronto witnessed last year, a similar initiative tackling the root of youth crime is necessary. Believe it or not, a problem exists in York and, left to grow, it will fester into a much bigger issue.

According to last year's police statistics, while major crimes were on the slide, youth crime was up by 18.7 per cent during the first half of 2005. Charges laid against young persons increased 15.5 per cent and the number of youths dealt with by other means increased 20.6 per cent.

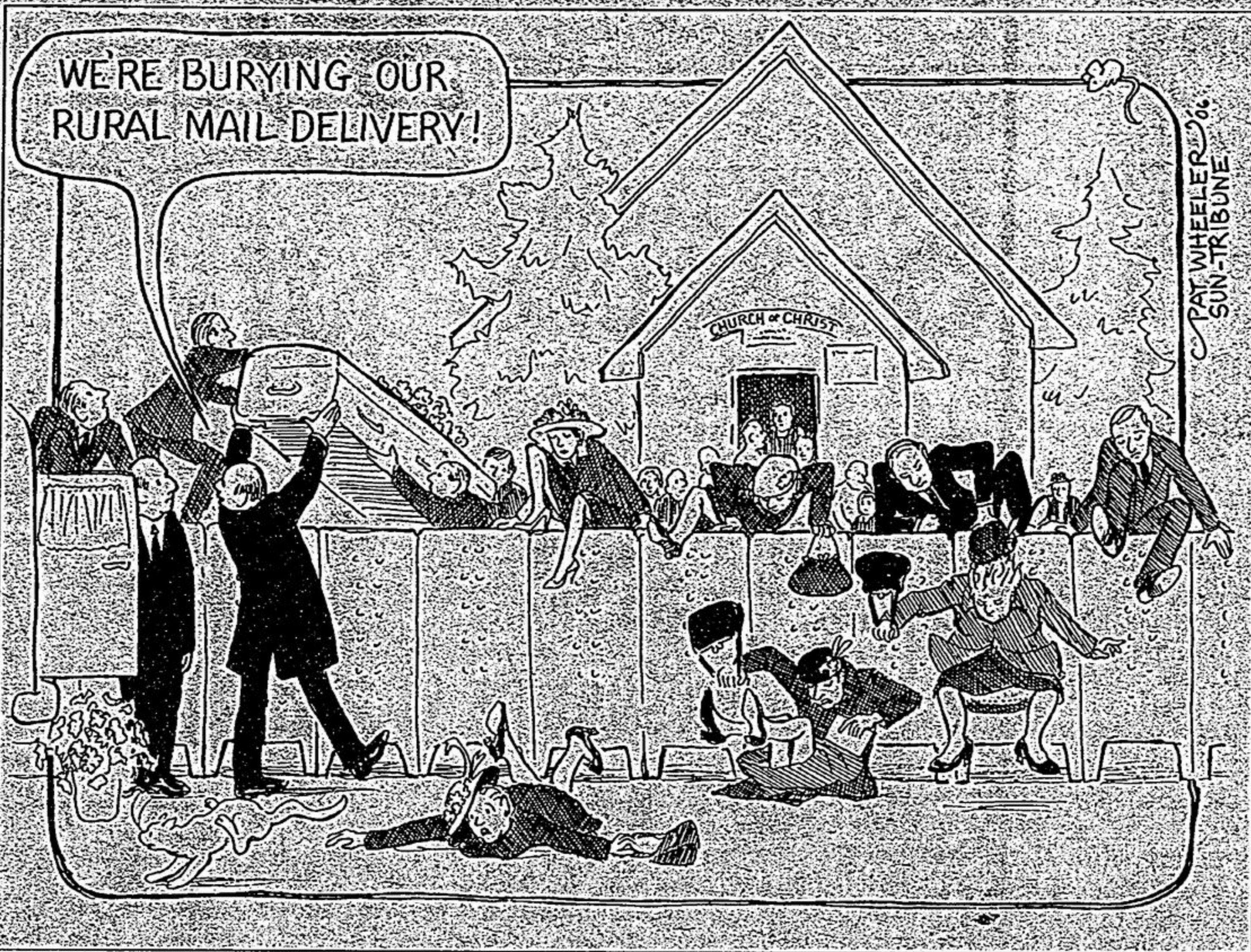
"We know the gang activity is ongoing in urban feeder areas and the gangs communicate very effectively," says Stuart Auty, president of the Canadian Safe School Network. "They're already in York Region, Mississauga, Durham and every part of the GTA."

That's why a program such as the one introduced last weekend in Toronto could act as preventive medicine in York.

And we're already looking in the right direction. In Vaughan, for example, the mayor's task force on public safety wants to create grassroots solutions to keep young people off the street.

A mentoring program is just the type of thing that could do it, provided it is supported by a strong corporate army.

It may be an ageless cliché, but, more and more, society is going back to the Pollyanna reality that it really does take a village to raise a child.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Another re-run or the real deal for theatre plans?

I'm as tired of editing stories on plans for a theatre in Stouffville as you probably are of reading them.

It's this community's version of the movie *Groundhog Day*.

It seems as if every year for the past several, a new proposal will surface, a sub-committee will be struck, and a plan to turn the old town hall into a centre for the performing arts will surface. The other option is a new facility.

Not that I'm anti-theatre. Far from it. If our family is an example, Stouffville would likely make very good use of a theatre.

The annual recitals for Stouffville dance troupes, music schools and theatre companies our children have been in have been held in theatres across the GTA, from Port Perry to Vaughan and Markham to King.

And when they were staged locally, they were in school gyms, seniors centres and church sanctuaries that attempted to double as theatres.

It's hardly an ideal situation. Town hall theatre plans were nixed in 2002 and 2005. There's still a web-site (www.clocktowertheatre.com) describing efforts.

Thoughts of incorporating a theatre into Stouffville's new high school, as done in Vaughan, Markham and Newmarket, were lost last year.

The latest news is a recommendation from a 15-member task force to, wait for it, build an arts centre.

Big surprise. This will be a municipal election issue this fall as sure as corruption and trust were front and centre in last month's federal vote.

If theatre supporters want to win over voters and candidates, they can start by producing numbers to sell their case:

- How much corporate money (a sticky point in early attempts) is anticipated from home builders and large companies?
- What will the theatre cost-taxpayers to build and run, compared to the arenas, the town offices or the pool-library, this town's other big-ticket facilities?
- How many dates a year can we expect our theatre to be used?
- Not that we're lining up for tickets for a five-night run with the Dave Matthews Band or the Boston Pops, but what level of touring entertainers can we expect to buy subscriber tickets for?

Stouffville isn't about to shrink. Residents will demand more, including a new hockey rink, better roads and, you guessed it, a theatre of their own.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Arm teenagers with trades

Every politician promises money will be spent on a cure.

I taught for more than 30 years in a vocational school for students who could not pass Grade 8. Eighteen shops provided hands-on training in everything from auto mechanics to horticulture. Most students went into trades as apprentices armed with new-found skills, not guns.

Several school boards now offer programs, including co-op, in which students can acquire apprenticeship credits but they are not paid.

Tradespeople should be encouraged to accept student apprentices full time and the students should receive an allowance.

We need tradespeople and teenagers need a positive role to play in our society. Allowing our youth to rely on welfare or crime are not options.

HERBERT BELL
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Cabinet ministers prove point

Pity the voters of Vancouver/Kingsway who strategically voted Liberal to ensure a progressive MP. There's was not a Conservative strategy. Truth is you never really know what you will get when you vote Liberal.

New Democrats know there is very little difference between the Conservatives and Liberals. Now new cabinet ministers Emerson and Fortier can help us prove the point. If anything good is to come from Mr. Harper's cabinet selection, let us hope it puts an end to strategic voting.

PAMELA COURTIOT
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@yrng.com or fax 905-513-7525

Canada Post inconveniencing seniors

It is, indeed, very depressing Canada Post decided unilaterally to discontinue mail delivery to residents on Warden Avenue, a system that has been in vogue for the past 25 years.

This decision does not take into account the inconvenience to senior citizens to have to make a special trip every day to check on their mail, in all kinds of weather conditions.

One can only imagine the mess that would surround the green boxes in winter and spring when all cars and people have to trudge through the snow and slush to get to their mail.

The question of any hazard to the mail delivery van and driver is untenable considering it has been successfully delivered for so many years.

I request Canada Post reconsider its decision and restore the mail delivery system as before.

N. MECKLAI
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