

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Better health care support needed

On the face of it, it's hard to accuse Queen's Park of not doing enough to support local hospitals.

Last year alone, it gave the green light to the \$60-million Southlake Regional Cancer Centre, provided \$46.4 million for an expansion of York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill and supported plans to merge Markham Stouffville and Scarborough Grace hospitals into a model health campus for the future.

On top of all that, it provided a stable long-term funding commitment of \$1.75 billion over the next three years across the province — something local hospitals have wanted for years.

And yet, we have a critical shortage of beds and ever increasing wait times.

At York Central Hospital, one patient was asked to wait a total of 26 months for spinal surgery to relieve excruciating pain. Premier Dalton McGuinty admitted Tuesday that surgery wait times have increased provincewide.

Why are York's hospitals still so strapped?

Well, it all comes down to growth.

Southlake reports its patient volumes have increased 33 per cent over three years and beds have simply not kept pace.

While money is pouring in, it doesn't come close to keeping pace with our explosive growth, according to Tariq Asmi, executive director of the GTA 905 Healthcare Alliance.

While 905 hospitals get 16 per cent of funding in the province, we are home to 25 per cent of the population, Mr. Asmi says. Half of the province's growth is in the 905 region and that pace continues at a rate of 100,000 new people each year.

What's more, under Ontario's Places to Grow legislation, York Region is supposed to grow to 1.5 million people by 2031. That growth will be concentrated in the three communities that have hospitals, plus Vaughan, which needs one but has yet to receive approval.

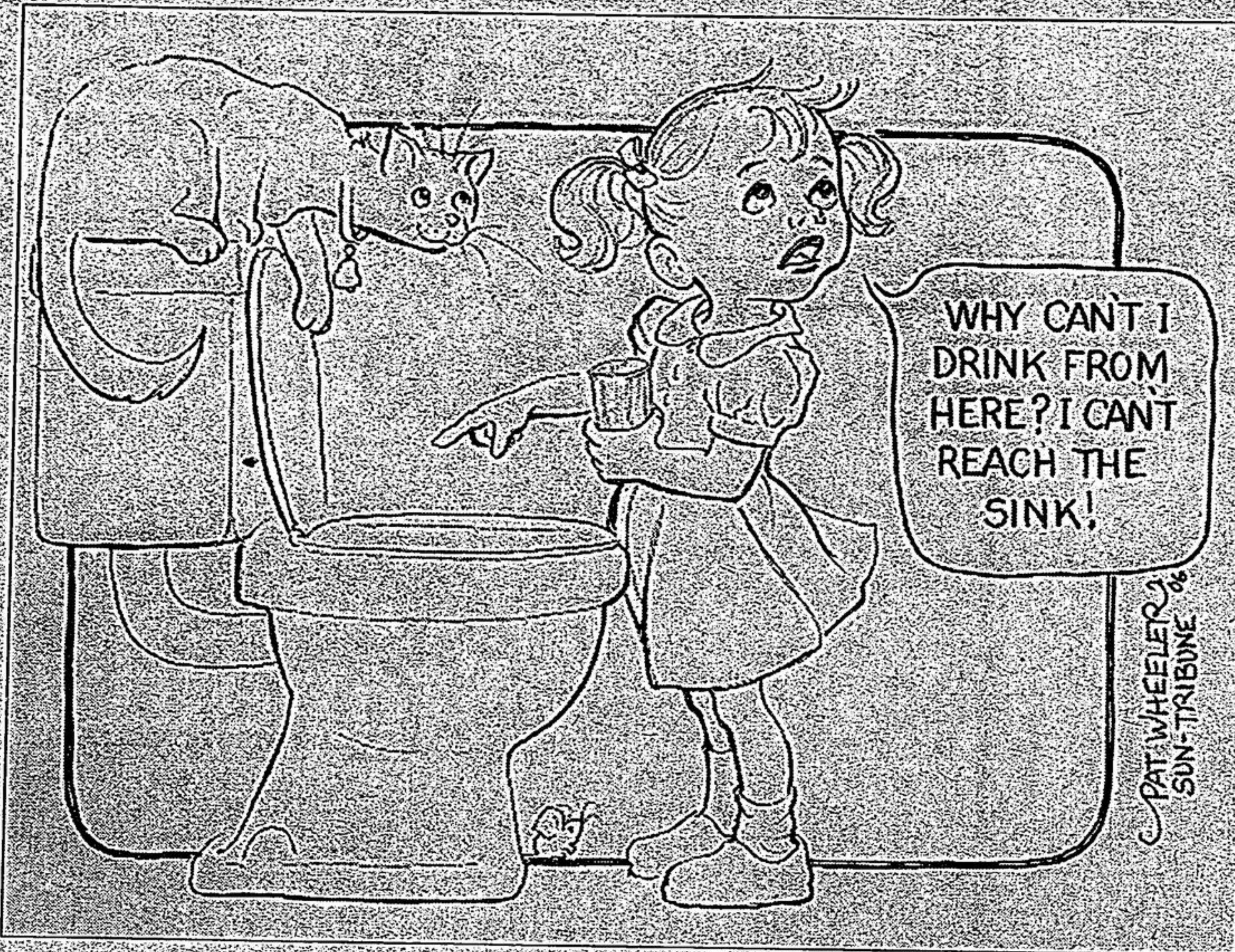
The government says little about providing support to meet the health care needs of these 600,000 new people.

It shouldn't be on the local taxpayers' shoulders. This "downloading" of broad provincial responsibilities to local governments has been a disaster all around.

The province needs to continue to recognize the needs of high-growth areas in its health care funding formulas.

And hospitals need to be innovative.

But we can't forget this is about caring for human beings. If the province wants more people living here, it must support a compassionate system to ensure York remains a place where people will want to live.



Letters to the Editor

Thanks, Spirit, for playoff run

There was the U.S. Miracle on Ice back in 1980. Then came the 2002 Winter Olympics with team Canada's gold medal win with the loonie magic buried at centre ice.

All have a place in hockey history, no doubt.

Fast forward to the spring of 2006 in a town called Stouffville. A town on the move and a town that a lot of people did not know.

But ask people in Parry Sound, Aurora, Newmarket, Oakville and downtown Bathurst (St. Mike's). The citizens in those centres know that in Stouffville there is the "Spirit".

Yes, the Stouffville Spirit Provincial Junior A Hockey League team. A team that did something this spring that has seldom been done before. They united a community, they brought young, old and new residents to a playoff party that lasted six weeks. They made us cheer. They beat the big hockey powers, Newmarket, Aurora and Oakville, and then hooked up with St. Mike's for the league crown.

They never gave up even when they were down 3-1 to Oakville, they showed all of us in Stouffville you never quit on a dream.

On Easter Sunday, they battled once again, losing to St. Mike's in double overtime. The Spirit dream did not die, it's only been put on hold.

Gentlemen, thanks for a great season and for a very special playoff run. And thanks for showing us that in Stouffville, there is a strong sense of Spirit, both on and off the ice. See you next year for another great ride.

Stouffville, get your season tickets before they are gone.

COUNCILLOR ROB HARGRAVE
 TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-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, P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@ymg.com or fax 905-294-1538

More to worry about in town than busy social calendar

Re: Jim Thomas' column, April 13.

I was amazed to see Harry Bowes is actually concerned there is too much going on in Stouffville.

He referenced several social events, including church events, that took place April 8. Apparently it's such a terrible situation, "He's going to do something about."

Harry, as a councillor (my councillor), instead of worrying about what the adults of Stouffville are doing on a Saturday night, start worrying about important issues that affect the town.

Harry, as a councillor (my councillor), instead of worrying about what the adults of Stouffville are doing on a Saturday night, start worrying about important issues that affect the town.

Once you've "done something about that", you can start to address the many other issues that truly affect the well being of the town.

But please, we don't pay you to worry about multiple social gatherings on a Saturday night.

DAVID BAXTER
 STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Helping every business become award-worthy

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce will honour its best tonight.

They'll raise a glass of chablis to the best businesses in the community at the association's annual awards night at Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club.

That's nice.

But not every business, even in a place the size of Whitchurch-Stouffville, can go home with a plaque.

That's life.

Still, there are things every business in this town can do to improve themselves, including this one.

They often have to be pointed out by an outsider, like the peeling paint in the front hall your mother-in-law keeps mentioning.

The chamber adopted a program many years ago that saw people from out of town visit businesses and write reviews, including a list of things that should be done. And not done.

It's a great program, adopted from a West Coast business group, that costs nothing.

We've all visited an establishment, be it a restaurant, hotel or retailer, and vowed never to return. But what if we set the anger aside for a minute and sent a constructive e-mail to the manager? It might accomplish something. And you'd be part of the solution.

Examples? My father, a visitor to Stouffville, and I were shopping at a large and successful store on what looked like one of their busiest days of the year.

"Nice store, but I can't tell the customers from the employees," said my dad. "Who do I ask for help?"

I passed the tip on to the manager. Weeks later, the store staff wore name tags and brightly coloured tops.

Mission accomplished.

I walked out of another store one day after placing what I planned to purchase back on the shelf. Problem? The clerk waiting on the person in front of me took time out to slam another customer, by name, for not following some insane in-store rule. The neighbourhood Soup Nazi, made famous in Seinfeld, is not what you want to be known as.

Businesses that genuinely give back, be it through sponsoring teams or activities, seem to prosper. Funny how that works.

What doesn't work? The local outlets of national chains that must send requests for sponsorship to head office.

That's not taking care of business, small-town style.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune* and a former director of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce.

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