

OPINION

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Editorial

Liberals made tests easier: MPP

In an election-style stop at a York Region public school Tuesday, Premier Dalton McGuinty boasted about how his Liberals have made education their priority.

As noisy children, excited to be back on the first day of class, scampered about at Thornhill Woods Public School, Mr. McGuinty pointed to higher standardized test scores as part of the proof in his pudding. Results from the latest round of Grade 3 and Grade 6 tests administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) do show improvements. The 2004-05 tests found a 5-per-cent improvement in reading among Grade 3 students, a 3-per-cent increase in writing and 2-per-cent in math. The Grade 6 results also show improvements. In reading and writing, there was a 5-per-cent improvement and math scores were up 3 per cent.

Sounds pretty impressive. But the question is why? Did the Liberals' influx of funding to battle the years of Mike Harris cutbacks really pay dividends so quickly?

Not if you ask NDP education critic Rosario Marchese, who says Mr. McGuinty and then education minister Gerard Kennedy "cheated" by making the standardized tests easier.

He says in the last round of tests, students were allowed to use calculators, were given more time and more multiple choice questions and only spent six hours being tested, compared to 10 on earlier tests. Actually, parents of elementary school students who have taken the test don't need to take the NDP for their word; they only need to ask the children.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the Liberals as they pump up their education plumage for next year's election. Without debating the overall merits of standardized testing, one thing is certain, if you are going to have standardized tests, the results should be based on the same type of test. Showing improvements based on an easier test — a different test — isn't fair. It's like comparing Dr. Suess to Shakespeare.

As Mr. McGuinty played hopscotch with the children at Thornhill Woods, rolling up his sleeves, pretending to be one of us, his act is a reminder to parents: education has always been, and will always remain, a political football. Politicians will always use it to further their goals.

It's up to parents to make sure it works for their children. Standardized tests, smaller class sizes and such are meaningless unless parents take stock of what's happening at their schools day-to-day.

After all, that's what public education should be about, not political rhetoric and election grandstanding.



Off The Top

with **Jim Mason**
For the love of our friends we hit the road

Even if we don't find cures for all cancers — and God knows I hope I'm wrong — there is another purpose to these road course marathons people are tackling this month.

We see the women pounding the Stouffville pavement in packs, prepping for this weekend's Weekend to End Breast Cancer, a two-day trek through the neighbourhoods of Toronto.

A week from Sunday, it's the 25th anniversary of the Terry Fox Run in Stouffville, the 26th nationally.

We know these events will raise millions of dollars across the country. They already have. And that money has funded research into a disease that has invaded all of our families and neighbourhoods.

What the donations can't buy is love. And anyone who has merely stumbled by a Terry Fox Run or heard the spirited chants from Weekend to End marchers has felt it.

Love may not buy a cure, but it can do a ton. It can bring families, neighbours, friends and entire communities together.

It can remind us how fragile health and life are. How, one day we can be planning for retirement, birthday parties and vacations only to be stopped sharply in our tracks.

There will be bands blaring and competitive runners warming up before the Terry Fox Run at the Stouffville Arena. But one of the neatest scenes is the dedication board in the rink lobby.

Away from the hustle of the registration desk and the water stop, entrants write a message to a loved one struck by cancer. It's a private moment gone public, shared with all who care to stop.

I dare you to read half the dedications and not cry. Can't be done. It will change your day, putting those petty problems at home or work into perspective. It will also put an extra spring into your step as you cruise the north side of Stouffville on your walk, run or cycle.

Just ask your neighbours, Bill Murphy, Dixie Sellers, Bob Gatfield, Dal Gourley, Brad Stevens, Jeremy Schell and Keith Acton.

They have members of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Terry's Team, cancer survivors who help promote the event.

They have been the subject of dedications and prayers during their battles.

They've felt the love of this community during the last 24 Terry Fox Runs, while helping to raise thousands of dollars to slay the dreaded disease.

Terry Fox Run pledge sheets are available at Schell Lumber, the Lebovic Leisure Centre and the arena.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

Letters to the Editor

Powers-that-be repaved wrong section of McCowan Road

No doubt, residents along McCowan Road between Bloomington and Stouffville roads are pleased their stretch has been nicely repaved.

Why did the powers-that-be have paints solid lines the whole length?

Previously, one could pass except near the top and bottom of the stretch and at crossroads. May those responsible be stuck behind a slow-moving vehicle every day of their commute.

Considering the reasonable state of the old surface, one also wonders why this stretch was repaved at all.

Has anyone thought of the stretch between Aurora and Bloomington roads? This section has been sign-posted as "Caution broken road" for years. It is long overdue for attention.

**HARDY NISSEN
BALLANTRAE**

Will anyone challenge girls' team at Stouffville's Terry Fox Run?

As we all know, Stouffville is what you would call a hockey town.

Since hockey teams flourish in Stouffville, what exactly is it that makes any team different from the rest? It is the commitment to give back to the community to make it even stronger.

The bantam Stars girls A rep team is prepared to do just that by participating in Whitchurch-Stouffville's 25th annual Terry Fox Run Sept. 17 from the Stouffville Arena.

As the coach of this team, I know our girls

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, 6290 Main St., Stouffville, L4A 1G7, e-mail jmason@yrng.com or fax 905-640-8778.

believe teamwork is needed to accomplish any goal, whether it be on the ice or in the community.

For this reason, they are excited to announce they will be stickhandling their way through the run.

They are also putting out a challenge to any boys' teams to do the same.

Just to let you know, these girls have been working hard during their regular dry land training sessions all summer.

Is any team up for the challenge?

Pledge sheets are available at locations throughout Stouffville, including the arena.

Volunteers will be at Sobeys, Schell Lumber, TD Bank, A&P, Shoppers Drug Mart and the Lebovic Leisure Centre Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon.

For more information on the run, call 905-640-4705.

**MIKE HUMPHEYS
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