

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Here is the 1% solution

Given a choice between paying a penny of GST less on every dollar you spend or having fewer potholes on the roads, less chance of having a chunk of overpass fall on your head, better transit to ease traffic congestion and generally improved municipal services, which would you pick? Yup, that's what most other people would probably say, too.

That's why Toronto Mayor David Miller's idea to have one of the six remaining percentage points of GST turned over to municipalities is a much better course of action than simply cutting the GST by another percentage point as the Harper federal government has previously promised. The modern reality is that municipal government is the level that touches our lives most directly every day. Whether it is the policing and fire services that help keep us safe, the street cleaning that determines the attractiveness of our surroundings, the recycling and other environmental services that have become so timely and important, the maintenance and improvement of our urban infrastructure of roads, bridges and amenities such as parks, or the delivery of social services that do so much to shape the quality of urban life for all of us — all this, in this era of downloading is now the responsibility of our municipal and regional governments.

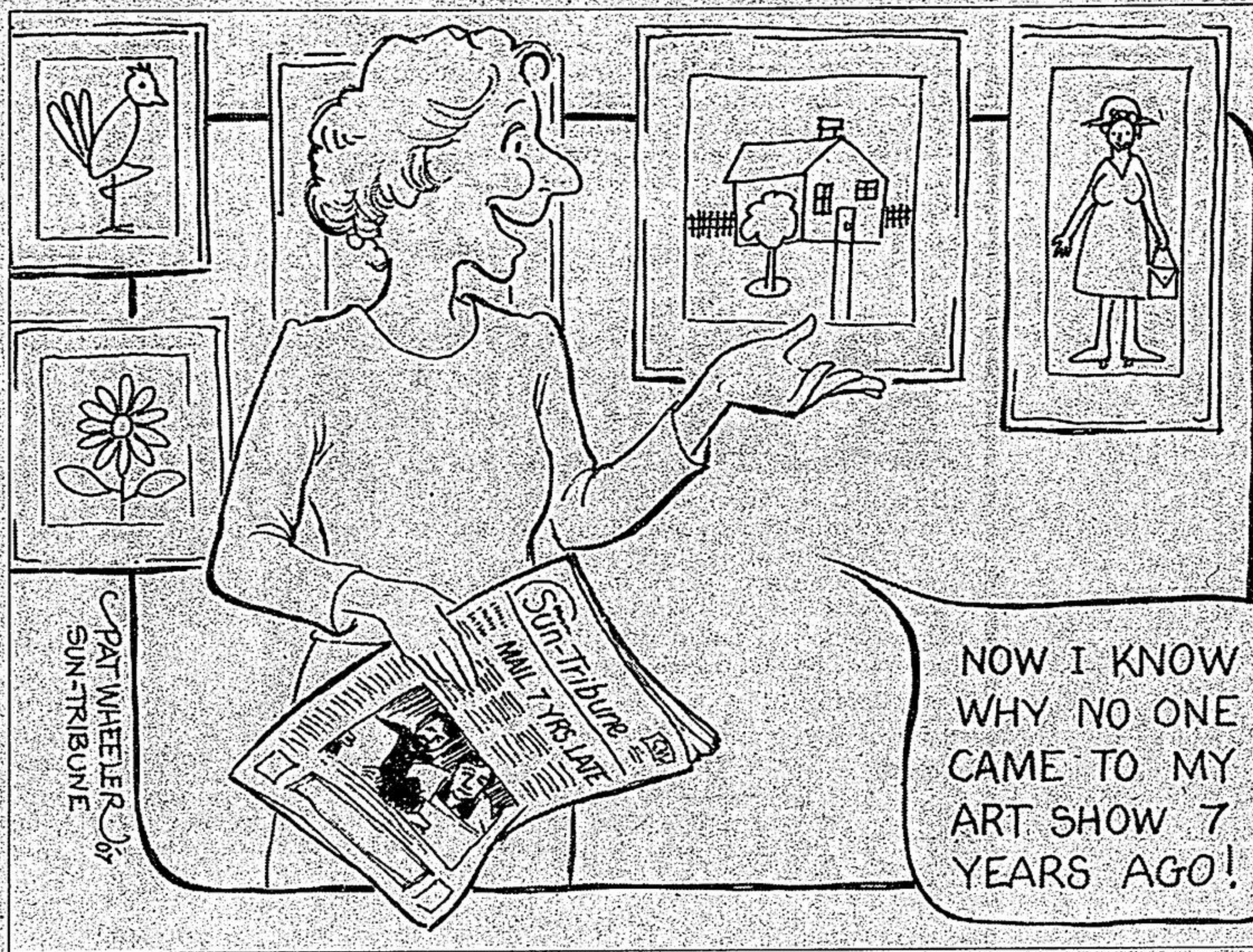
The need for funding for all this and more is particularly acute here in York Region, where our rapid growth creates an ever expanding demand for services while, at the same time, there is no reliable source of money to pay for them other than property taxes. Those taxes, in turn, cannot be increased much without causing individual hardship as well as slowing the pace of development.

On the other hand, the GST, much as it is disliked, has become a tremendous source of public sector cash, while being such an accepted fixture in daily lives.

Let's face it, how much has the recent cut in the GST by a percentage point, from 7 per cent to 6 per cent, really improved your existence?

Do you find yourself cheering that your taxes are lower now every time you go to the store? Meanwhile, though, the cut has stripped some \$5 billion a year from federal revenues, to no one's readily apparent benefit. The further one-percentage-point cut in the GST that has been promised by "Canada's New Government," as they continue calling themselves, would accomplish the same minimal effect.

If the Harper government really wants to do something new and creative, it should pick up on this excellent idea that would actually improve the quality of life here in York Region and everywhere across Canada.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Sorry, theatre fans, but it's hockey season in Stouffville

Sorry, but we aren't Hockeyville, that handle dished out annually by a cheese maker to the town in the nation with the best hockey sense.

Sure, we have some puck pedigree, with the multitude of rinks, indoors and out, and championship banners in our past.

But Whitchurch-Stouffville didn't give birth to the game as Kingston and some inlet in the Maritimes claim to have.

With apologies to the local theatre crowd, this is a hockey town, for now.

But, with further apologies to the hockey heads, our entire existence does not evolve around what happens on the ice at Ninth Line and Recreation Lane.

You've seen CBC's Hockey Day features, the ones showing personalities and entire communities that appear to live out of the local ice box. Towns on the Prairies survive or die with or without the existence of a local arena. It defines them, unites them.

Sure, we have our moments. Stouffville has no larger citizen than Keith Acton, the local boy turned legend, who has played or coached in the NHL since 1980. He went from our back yard rinks to a Stanley Cup, NHL all-star game and the world championships.

This town will back anything he is behind, from his pair of charity hockey games and golf tournaments, to banquets and ball games.

And about this time each year, this town reverts to its past, shooting large crowds into the rink for junior and minor hockey playoffs.

This is as good a time as any. The Spirit Jr. A team hosts Collingwood tonight in the second round of the provincial league playdowns. Stouffville's Clipper atom, minor bantam and juvenile squads continue their quest for Ontario Minor Hockey Association A-level titles at home this weekend.

Bundle up. See you at the rink, Stouffville.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

School's peace garden angel not immune from vandalism

Re: *The ultimate in small town vandalism, column by Jim Mason, Feb. 22*

Mr. Mason's column prompted me to further add to his most eloquent words.

Sadly, St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School fell victim to vandalism recently when its peace garden was violated.

This garden was thoughtfully placed in the front of the school, where it is well lit and faces a main street, Millard, for a very good reason. It was to deter hooligans from tampering with it.

This thoughtful consideration was marred when a concrete angel we thought was permanently staked into the ground was recently beheaded. I imagine decapitating a concrete statue would require some muscle and malicious intent. No accident here.

Let's promote random acts of kindness, not random acts of vandalism.

JANET MONTESANO
STOUFFVILLE

Thanks to paper, recyclers for spreading green word

Editor's Note: Be sure to check out Re-Use-Ful on our website, www.yorkregion.com

I moved to Stouffville from Toronto in late 2005 and I was very impressed to see that The Sun-Tribune ran David Suzuki's columns on a regular basis.

To be honest, I didn't expect a small-town

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newspaper in the 905 would give such prominence to environmental issues.

Now, even Stephen "Opt out of Kyoto" Harper is attempting to appear green, though, it's clear we all have to become more environmentally aware and responsible.

Taking even small steps is better than doing nothing at all. For example, there's an organization, free to join, called Freecycle that operates on the Web in towns and cities across North America.

It's a great way to recycle items you no longer need. You offer things free for the taking, and, in turn, can offer to pick up items that interest you.

This is a far better solution than throwing out things to clog up landfills and wasting precious resources to create more stuff. Stouffville currently has 269 members, and you can also join, say, the larger Aurora-Newmarket group.

Go to <http://freecycle.org/> for more information.

Through Freecycle I've been able to find homes for all sorts of household objects that would otherwise have ended up in the trash.

MARIE-LYNN HAMMOND
STOUFFVILLE

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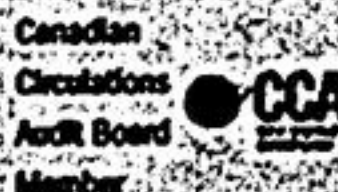
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