

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Keep public funds in public schools

On the surface, John Tory's plan to extend funding beyond just the Catholic system to all "faith-based" schools in Ontario appears fair.

If elected premier Oct. 10, the Conservative leader says he will divert \$500 million from the public system to faith-based schools, as a start.

We assume, that money would go to schools such as Stouffville Christian School.

There's an area twist to the debate.

Eight families with special needs children in York Region launched a legal challenge this summer against a provincial practice they say denies funding to their children because they attend independent religious schools.

In one case, the province refused to pay for a magnifying device for a legally blind girl who attends an Islamic school, according to the parents. In two other cases, families had to remove their children from Jewish schools and put them in public schools so they could get the care they say they need.

It may seem unfair to them that students at Catholic schools get special help, while students at other religious schools do not, but the fact is it is a historical precedent in our country, written into our Constitution as people of Catholic and Protestant faiths came together to create our country.

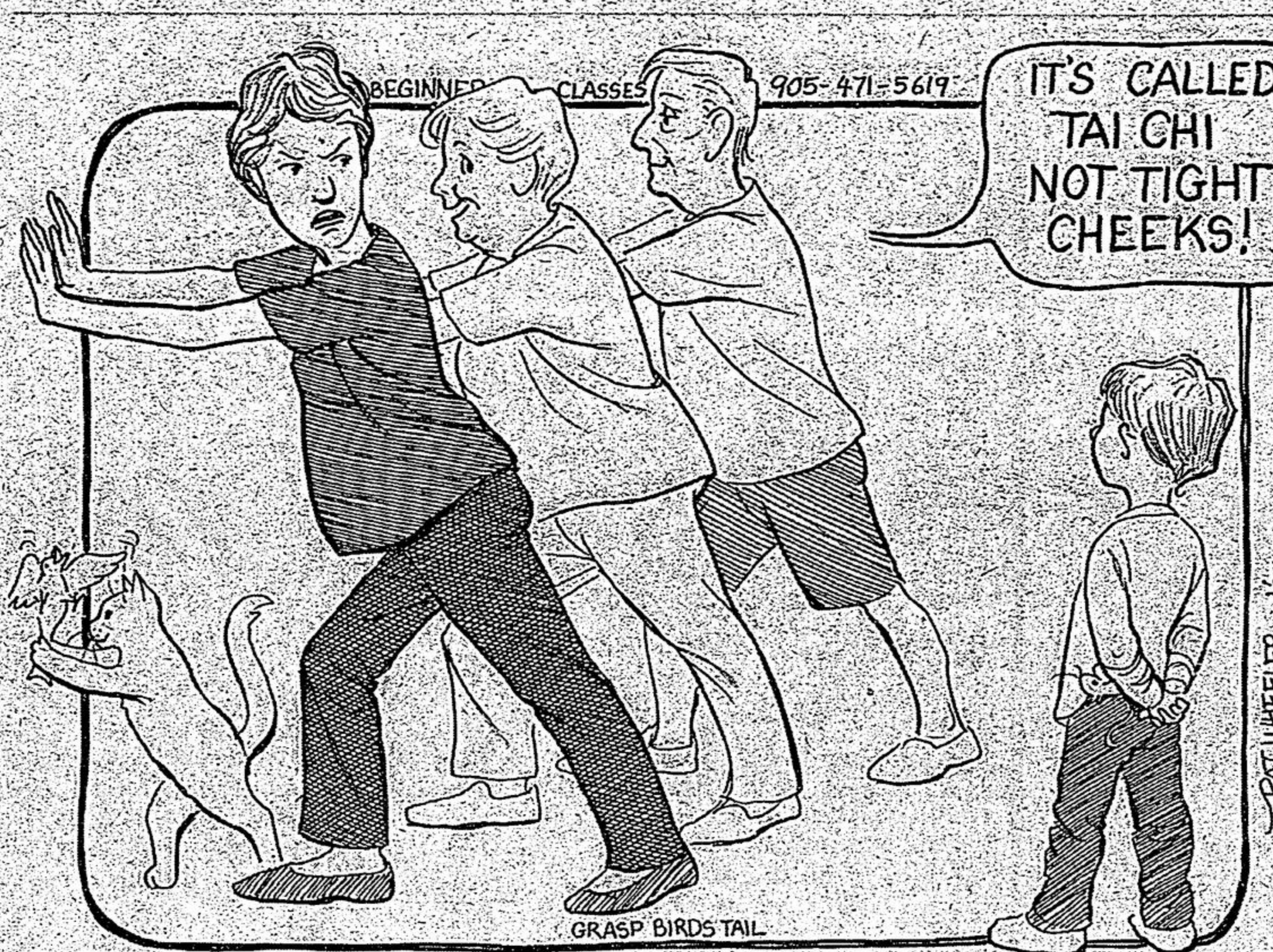
Religion has long since been removed from the curriculum at our public schools, making them accessible to all.

To begin extending funding to every group that operates a religious school — to have taxpayer-funded assistants and equipment in schools run privately — is simply asking too much of the Ontario taxpayer. It opens a door that may never be closed.

Parents of deaf, blind and learning disabled students do have an option, that is to send their children to an open, inclusive and publicly funded system where they can get the care they need under the authority of elected school boards and Ministry of Education.

For our society to flourish, we need to bring young people together in our schools. We also need to ensure our tax dollars are spent in schools that meet provincial standards.

In the meantime, the province can do more to help youngsters of all faiths with special needs. As it stands, children already in the public school system who need help do not always get it. Doing more to help these neediest of students, while encouraging parents of special needs students to turn to our public school system for help, will be the best solution for all concerned.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Whitchurch-Stouffville has embraced Terry Fox's legacy

The spirit of Terry Fox fiercely lives on in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

You'll see it on the streets of north Stouffville Sunday. Hundreds will fill the roads and sidewalks, walking, running, cycling and inline-skating in the name of Terry.

Few, if any, would ever have seen Terry, let alone met him.

But, that Terry Fox passion and grit affected so many. Just like cancer, the disease the Terry Fox Run is attempting to eradicate.

Whitchurch-Stouffville is far from the top 10 of Ontario communities, population-wise. But, this town raised \$109,000 for the run last year, the 10th highest of the 250 runs across the province.

From the first events of the early 1980s run out of Latham Hall to today's larger runs from the Stouffville Arena and track, the Terry Fox Run is a tradition.

It's entrenched as a rite of fall, right up there with buying school supplies, pulling out the hockey equipment and closing the cottage.

Barb and Doug Todd know. Their Todd Pools squad has taken part in the corporate and family side of the run since 2002, raising \$44,357 along the way.

Look for an even larger contingent of Todds and friends when participants congregate Sunday at 1 p.m. on the track.

Also, look for the large crew of volunteers headed by run co-ordinator Sandy Schell Kennedy. A small town doesn't crack the top 10 without a superb team effort.

Terry Fox was never in Stouffville before his death in 1981.

But, his family knows of this town and its love for all things Terry.

His parents, Rolly and Betty, visited one year. Later, brother Darrell Fox, now national director of the Terry Fox Foundation, was here for the Stouffville run.

They get it.

So does Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Take a bow.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

York Region removing large trees for Stouffville-area road widening

Re: Tree-clearing by developer irks town, residents, Aug. 16.

In my old dictionary, irk is defined as "to weary or trouble; to annoy, bore, vex."

Do you know what a developer has planned for the stretch of the Vivian Road from Hwy. 48 to Durham Road 30/Tenth Line?

The developer is to widen the road and take out towering hardwoods with garbs the size of bushel baskets.

And, so no one is inconvenienced, great detours are planned during the project, taking out even more trees.

This stretch of road is in the beautiful Oak Ridges Moraine, called by MP Lui Temelkovski "an ecological treasure". It is "...something that should never be compromised".

Well, who is our developer? None other than York Region's roads department.

Does this Class C - the greatest destruction to the environment the environmental studies report gives - irk me?

No. Turn the dial to the highest possible.

Try incense, which my dictionary defines as "To enkindle or excite, as a passion ... to inflame with anger, madden."

Want to protest? Write to your councillor, our mayor, MPP Frank Klees, York Region roads, Mr. Temelkovski, Environment Minister Laurel Broten, Premier Dalton McGuinty or Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Please, be more than irked.

One of the big trees gives off enough oxygen daily for four residents to breathe.

Write, phone, blog or e-mail every day. David Suzuki will love you. Me, too.

HELEN SPRING
STOUFFVILLE

Suzuki's comments on parents, children ring true outside Stouffville schools

Re: Respect for nature has to start at home, column by David Suzuki, Sept 8.

Mr. Suzuki notes "children are becoming increasingly housebound and sedentary".

Specifically, Suzuki was reproaching parents for their failure to connect that problem, as well as other environmental challenges, "with the line-ups of SUVs and minivans several blocks long outside schools every morning and every afternoon."

Mr. Suzuki's musings are more than accurate for Stouffville parents. I shot a photograph of a traffic-jam a week ago Wednesday at 8:07 a.m. on Millard Street at Glad Park Avenue.

Despite the new sidewalks, crossing guards and bike lanes on Millard Street, so many parents still choose to drive their children to school.

Mr. Suzuki is asking the right questions of parents at the start of a new school year: "If we don't change our ways first, what incentive do children have to behave more responsibly?"

For the 2007-08 school year, I encourage fellow parents of school-aged children to take up the challenge and walk the children to school, even as we nudge our schools to plant more gardens and develop better outdoor education curriculum.

ARNOLD NEUFELDT-FAST
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS-POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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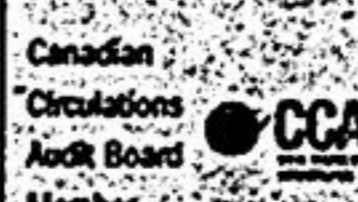
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A York Region Media Group community newspaper. The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Forstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.