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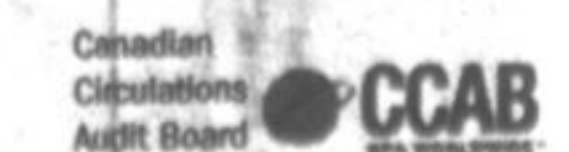
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# OPINION

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**

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## EDITORIAL

### Upside to 'eco' fees?

The premise behind the eco fee is sound — who doesn't want to make sure every effort is made to do what's right for the environment?

Unfortunately, its implementation has been bungled. Ontarians are left with the feeling they're facing yet another one of Premier Dalton McGuinty's "it's not a tax" tax.

The fee was added to a variety of products July 1.

The province went out of its way to get its pro-HST message to the people, but the eco fee came in with little fanfare or warning.

The secrecy doesn't end there.

There's so much confusion surrounding what products face the fee, how much it is, where the money goes and who determines it, people can't help but believe they're getting hoodwinked once again.

The Stewardship Ontario website attempts to explain the program, but clears up little.

You will find out these fees are not a tax and Stewardship Ontario is not a government agency, although it is regulated by the government.

None of the money collected

goes to the province and the eco fee is determined by the manufacturer or retailer.

The site also makes it clear Stewardship Ontario is not involved, in any way, in the setting or collection of eco fees.

What it doesn't explain is the product selection.

Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak was quick to question why items such as an Earth-friendly shower cleaner that uses natural ingredients and grass seed are among those facing fees.

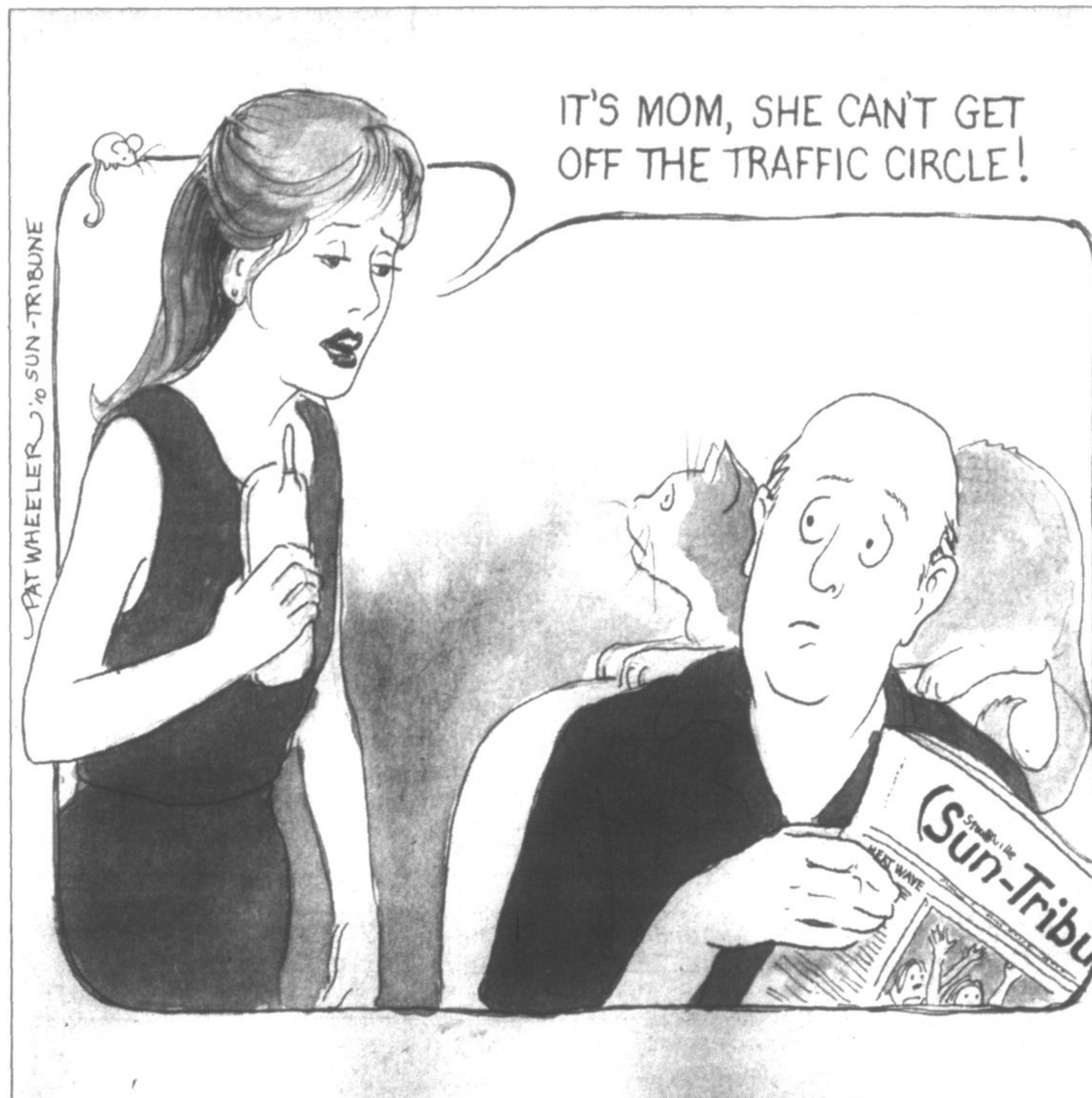
It has prompted Mr. Hudak to pledge to scrap the fee if his party wins the next election.

But there's a better answer.

Instead of dumping the fee, use it for what it could be, an education tool.

The fee could make people aware the product they are purchasing has some disposal issues. This might prompt consumers to try a different product that doesn't come with the same issues.

Let's embrace the spirit behind the fees and see them as the way the world is moving. But let's make sure there's no secrecy or confusion and that it's easy to see the benefits of the plan.



## Transported back in time at miniature train event

It was a perfect summer family fun event. And yes, as I heard numerous amazed parents query on Sunday, it really was free.

Last weekend's open house presented by the Richmond Hill Live Steamers train enthusiasts in Whitchurch-Stouffville was well attended and much appreciated by hundreds — and I do mean hundreds — of families from across York Region.

The Saturday and Sunday event in the lovely and cool forested site maintained by the train club attracted families pushing strollers and carrying babies in snuglies and doting grandparents, too.

The thrill of free rides on working scale-model steam and diesel trains proved exciting and fun for young and old.

The piercing whistles of train engines leaving the small wooden station was equaled by the excited shouts of children exclaiming over yet another train they just spotted.

It brought me back to the days when I came with my two excited children. In fact, Sunday, I brought my grown-up



Marney Beck

son back to the club of which he'd been a privileged junior member many years ago.

He was six or seven when he was in that 'train phase' many parents will recognize. Thomas the Tank Engine was his favourite TV show, wooden Brio or metal Thomas trains accompanied him to bed at night and the prospect of taking a ride with Bill, our favourite train engineer at the Live Steamers train club, was a rapturous weekend outing.

Our family made many treks from Richmond Hill to the track east of

Aurora and paid for our son's membership in the club for several years. He was so proud of his member pin, club T-shirt and key to the private wash-room. The adult members, especially Bill and Sybil Clothier, were doting and welcoming and it was a mutually beneficial relationship for quite a few years, as I helped with public relations duties for the club.

Of course, as children's interest change, trains became less important to my son, replaced by other interests and activities. In recent years, we had little contact.

But last weekend's open house seemed an opportune time to go back and check out the improvements to the tracks and visit with old friends.

All the fun aspects, such as working train signals, bridges to watch the trains below, a snack bar and more were much the same. But now there is a double track system, allowing for trains to go both ways through the small station.

My son and I chatted with Bill and Sybil and I thanked them for their kindnesses many years ago to my little boy,

who now towered smiling above us all.

As we walked through the site, a man yelled my son's name. It turned out one of the members and engineers was Jim Butt, my son's Grade 12 transportation and technology teacher.

What an amazing coincidence. He probably gave rides to my son a decade ago and neither recognized the other, years later in a class at Bayview Secondary. It was one of life's serendipitous moments.

We would have chatted much longer with him and the other members, but long line-ups of eager kids and parents prevented too much conversation.

Sorry you missed the fun? Don't despair. Mark Sept. 11 and 12 on your calendar. That's when Live Steamers throw open their gates again for another two-day open house.

Visit richmond-hill-live-steamers.tripod.com

Look for photographs on page 3.

Marney Beck is an editor with the York Region Media Group.