

OPINION



PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot
GENERAL MANAGER John Willems

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON. L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778
Class: 1-800-743-3353
DISTRIBUTION
1-855-853-5613

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Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

Advertising Manager
Anne Beswick
abeswick@yrmg.com

Circulation Co-ordinator
Daphne Laurie
dlaurie@yrmg.com

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EDITORIAL

You have pretty clear choice to make for Ontario in 28 days

ISSUE: It's tough to wade through promises and get answers on complicated issues.

You have just 28 days to make an important decision about who you most trust to spend your provincial tax dollars for the next four years.

And this time around, you've been given a pretty clear choice.

You can decide if you want your cash being spent on expanded or new programs — a little sugar for all — as the Kathleen Wynne Liberals and the NDP are proposing in this campaign.

It's important to note, however, that the province's total debt is now forecast to reach almost \$338 billion within the next three years.

That's almost unheard of: Ontario can't afford to be plunged further into debt.

If more spending is not your thing, and you're more for fiscal restraint, you might prefer the other choice of the Tim Hudak Conservatives. They promise to make cuts and tough decisions and significantly claw back spending.

What's not so clear is how to wade through all the politicking, grandstanding and promising that is typical of any election race to make a choice that best fits with your core values, beliefs and budget expectations.

In York Region, citizens have told us they are tired of hearing empty promises about how one party will boost the economy, help middle-class families and small businesses make ends meet and keep taxes from spiralling out of control.

We want answers about how each government plans to deliver on all its promises and spending schemes.

For example, Mr. Hudak pledges to axe 100,000 public sector jobs to attack Ontario's \$12.5-billion deficit. You might agree the public sector is bulking out of control and that paycheques, benefits and pensions of civil servants are enviously more generous than a majority of comparable private-

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sector jobs.

A level playing field would be welcomed by many voters.

But at what cost? That's the question we need to ask Conservative candidates as they visit our communities in York Region. Will services be cut and in what other areas will those savings be utilized?

The NDP vows to take the HST off hydro bills, for example, saving a typical Ontario family about \$120 every year. But where will Andrea Horwath and her party make up the money lost from that revenue?

It's no secret, the Liberals have racked up a record deficit in the past two years. Still, they push more spending to boost the economy and create jobs. How can we possibly pay for all this new glitter?

We encourage you to ask these questions during the next 28 days. Every political decision comes with a trickle-down effect and you need to know what those may be.

Get informed. You can attend any number of upcoming debates being held in every community in York Region over the next four weeks. Go to yorkregion.com and click on our Ontario Votes 2014 Hot Topic to find out where and when the next election debate is taking place in your riding. We will also promote these events in our papers right up until voting day — June 12 — and we have tough questions to ask candidates in all ridings to help guide your vote.

It's up to you which party will form Ontario's next government. Make sure your choice is an informed one.

BOTTOM LINE: Fate of Ontario hangs in the balance of informed voters.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Most welfare recipients are honest

It is not easy to fix poverty.

I read the recent 'Time to double minimum wage' and 'Welfare running out?' letters to the editor.

Yes, we have poor and welfare poor. Frankly, some are welfare bums and some are cheats and lazy good for nothings.

But I have to tell you most are not. A large number of welfare families with kids are headed by a mom with no father's name on the record. That is a fact — point blank.

What encourages this mom to work when the government says; no child care, whatever you make gets taken off your allowance, and automatic welfare until age of majority and the government does not even know if you live in Ontario (bank deposit you see).

Doubling the minimum wage will also not solve poverty. Why is simple. Costs of stuff will rise to eat up most of the gain. And rising costs will encourage more automation to eliminate jobs.

The minimum wage should be increased;

but in planned steps so the economy can adjust. And it will need to adjust and be watched for cost gouging.

And welfare, well lets face it — it is a mess made by governments. It is fundamentally messed up.

It should be a supplement to income and not a replacement of income. Let welfare recipients get more if they work.

Yes, bums and cheats deserve to have rotten vegetables thrown at them in the town square (the good old days).

But let us remember being poor is not fun no matter what we think about the problem.

And who voted for these governments that made and keep this messed up welfare system — look in the mirror, voters.

Pardon my French quotes but "In a democracy, people get the government they deserve".

Well, I'm done. Off to buy some stuff to put in the food bank containers at No Frills.

RON BOYD
STOUFFVILLE

Better way to retire

Thank you for the insightful series this spring on the importance of saving for retirement.

As one who is of retirement age and whose peers are also approaching retirement, I am very sensitive to this issue.

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune story has taken the position that PRPPs are the best way to go for Canadians preparing for retirement.

Businesses also support this approach and this should be of no surprise, as businesses are under no obligation to contribute to an employee's PRPP.

This would give an employee the perception their employer is providing a pension plan when, in fact, the employee could be totally funding their own retirement.

Furthermore, participation in a PRPP is voluntary. We know that human weakness is such that delayed gratification is a discipline in short supply these days.

We are a spoiled generation and have not faced the hardships of war and the great depression experienced

by our predecessors and, as a result, we drive up personal debt to enjoy what we feel we are entitled to now.

Many Canadians, including myself, feel that the best solution to the retirement crisis is an enhanced CPP.

It is a form of forced savings. Employers must match contributions made by employees.

Additionally, the CPP is very well run with excellent returns on investments. The CPP has the benefit of size allowing it to acquire assets not available to smaller privately run funds.

The success of PRPPs will depend on their ability to attract investors and the ability of fund managers — many of whom have unproven track records.

I would like to suggest an enhanced CPP for all Canadians is the way to go.

Yes, there will be an additional cost to workers and employers, but the economy will benefit in the long run when retirees have more money to spend in their retirement and are less reliant on social services.

A farmer from days past knew how to "put to pasture" a horse that has

worked hard all its life.

Should we not have the same consideration for hard-working Canadians?

BRIAN O'SULLIVAN
STOUFFVILLE

Green space needed around towns

Re: Uxbridge mayor no fan of our growth, May 8.

I agree with the Uxbridge mayor's comments.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has never had a direction when it comes to the environment. Developers are just ordinary people like you and I, however, most of them are greedy. When a developer cuts down trees or destroys fertile land, they call it progress.

I suggest York Region should implement a law to reserve at least a quarter mile around every municipal border, call it green space, walking trails or space for wildlife. Now is the time all mayors and councillors should band together, do it for the people, for the next election. (What a great campaign platform.)

STEVE PLIAKES
WHITCHURCH STOUFFVILLE