

JUST PLAIN TALENTED
When the public picks, art trumps allure A21

MAN'S MEAL
Meet Big Harv BUSINESS, B2



TORONTO STAR

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SARS memo muzzles staff: Inquiry

Province told to rescind directive
Premier denies responsibility

CAROLINE MALLAN
QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU CHIEF

The Ontario government has been accused of trying to muzzle civil servants who might be contacted as part of a judge's inquiry into the province's handling of the SARS crisis.

In a terse letter to a senior bureaucrat at the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, the lawyer for Mr. Justice Archie Campbell warns that a directive sent to civil servants last week that tells them to inform their supervisors if they are contacted by the SARS Commission must be rescinded immediately.

"This has the potential to interfere with the investigation and we ask that you take immediate steps to countermand any directions to ministry employees that they are not free to deal with the commission without reporting to their managers and receiving instructions on how to proceed," commission counsel Douglas Hunt wrote to John Fleming, the deputy minister of community services.

Hunt said in an interview yesterday that the memo — made public by the Liberals yesterday but brought to the commission's attention on Monday — contravenes the very nature of Campbell's inquiry.

He said it could compromise the commission's mandate to find out what mistakes were made in handling the outbreak.

► Please see SARS, A14

► How researcher discovered a promising SARS treatment, A3

► Conference told that threat of SARS was misread, A14

MPs approve gay hate crimes bill

Openly gay MP Swend Robinson scored a major triumph for same-sex rights yesterday as MPs passed his private member's bill by a 141-110 vote to extend hate crimes protection to gays and lesbians. Story, A8

Insurance special

Whether you're negotiating the minefield of skyrocketing car insurance rates or the confusing world of travel, home and even pet insurance, we offer some timely consumer advice. K1-K8

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Store and Box Price Monday to Friday 47¢ + 3¢ GST = 50¢ (higher outside the GTA)



Nothing runs like a politician

Outstanding in the field: Ontario's party leaders each took a turn behind the wheel during the International Plowing Match near Appleton yesterday. What do their tractors say about them? Judge for yourself:



Dalton McGuinty: Massey Ferguson 451

Massey Ferguson's motto: What to depend on; **The pitch:** One mid-sized tractor that can tackle just about any job you've got in mind; **Straight from the brochure:** Manoeuvrability to handle a variety of jobs; emission-compliant; high torque backup; semi-flat platform.



Ernie Eves: Landini Atlantis 70

Landini's motto: Ideas at work; **The pitch:** Atlantis is an all-purpose tractor with a modern and clean design ensuring maximum durability and unequalled reliability; **Straight from the brochure:** Half-platform; ideal for those who want... an easily amortized investment; always quick, precise and powerful.



Howard Hampton: Agrolux 60

Motto: Manufactured by Deutz-Fahr, whose motto is: Driven by Intelligence; **The pitch:** Agrolux is the embodiment of a winning concept; **Straight from the brochure:** Exceptional handling; especially versatile; a tight turning circle is an advantage both in the field and around the yard. **Election coverage, A6-A7**

Province ignored meat warnings

Red flags about processing plants raised in 1998

Local inspection wasn't adequate, report says

ROBERT CRIBB AND RICHARD BRENNAN
STAFF REPORTERS

The provincial government was alerted five years ago about the risk posed by meat-processing plants that are only "nominally" inspected, the Star has learned.

But despite being urged by its own consultant to "move rapidly" and ensure the plants are "controlled and regulated effectively," the province continued to let meat processors be inspected only two or three times a year by local boards of health.

Premier Ernie Eves conceded yesterday that the government had known for at least five years about concerns over meat-processing plants, but assured reporters that things would be better in 2008, when the province plans to adopt new national food safety standards still under development.

Since 1998, he said, "there have been several policy papers initiated by the ministry and the minister's office to come up with a comprehensive solution to food processing and meat processing (as) part of a comprehensive effort going on nationally." A 1998 report by the George Morris Centre, a Guelph-based agricultural think tank, Allocation of Meat Inspection Resources in Ontario, highlighted "tremendous harm done to the human population and economic dislocation to producers and processors if there is an outbreak of disease caused by irresponsible meat handling and/or inspection."

The report, written in consultation with officials from the provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP), expresses concerns that meat-processing plants in Ontario are only "nominally" under the jurisdiction of municipal health authorities. OIMP feels that the emphasis is on the word nominal since there are ill-defined protocols that are rarely applied.

► Please see Inspections, A6

No proof Iraq tied to 9/11: Bush

Disputes idea held by majority in U.S.

But says Saddam, Al Qaeda linked

TIM HARPER
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—U.S. President George W. Bush conceded for the first time yesterday that the United States had no evidence indicating Saddam Hussein had anything to do with the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

Bush made the comment in a brief encounter with reporters at the White House, an apparent bid to answer critics who have accused him of linking the Iraq war and the terrorist attacks to justify an ongoing occupation.

which is responsible for mounting American deaths and draining an economy already mired in deficit.

"We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with Sept. 11," Bush said.

But he said he had no doubt that the deposed Iraqi president had ties to Al Qaeda, the terrorist network led by Osama bin Laden. Bush has let the perception that Saddam was somehow involved in the attacks fester for many months, most recently in his televised address to the nation on Sept. 7.

► Please see Saddam, A13

► BBC journalist admits report went too far, A10

► Montrealer tied to Wesley Clark 9/11 controversy, A12

The hidden Toronto: A river runs under it

Surprise gusher reveals ancient stream
Pre-Ice Age course flows in the bedrock

JACK LAKEY
CITY HALL BUREAU

There's a river running through High Park, bubbling with cold, clear water that is thousands of

years old and pure enough to drink untreated. Its mysterious presence has been known, till now, only to a few. You can't see it, hear it or

swim in it. There are no fish. But it surely is there, percolating 50 metres below the ground while the city goes about its business above, entirely unaware.

It is called the Laurentian, and winds from Georgian Bay deep in a pre-glacial bedrock valley and through the hilly terrain

northwest of Toronto before finding its way to Lake Ontario.

Until the city capped two old artesian wells in High Park, nobody knew exactly where the southerly portion of the underground river was, or how it made its way into the lake.

It was only after drilling began

in August on a monitoring well near the capped wells that it was discovered. The monitoring well exploded, spewing sand, shale and gravel the size of golf balls while rocketing a plume of water 15 metres into the air.

► Please see River, A16

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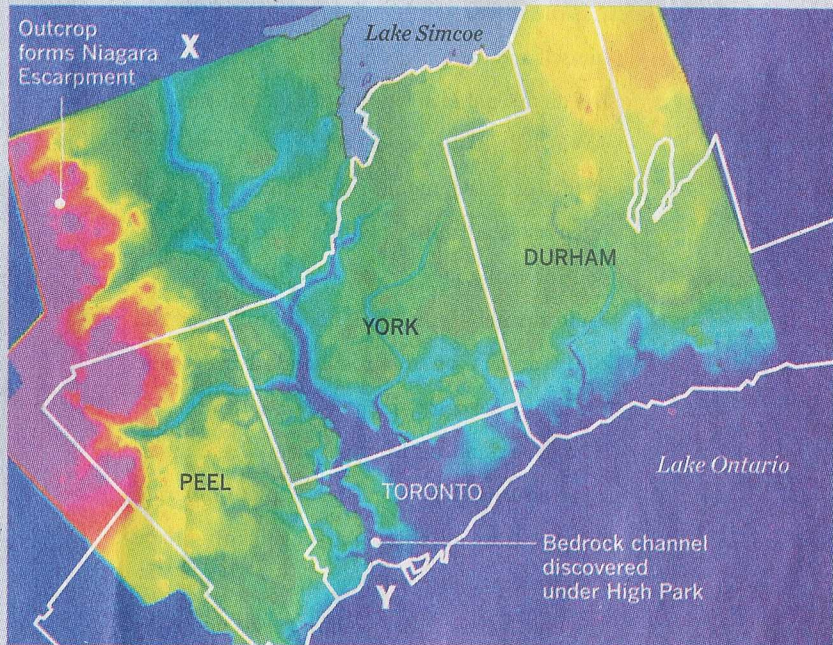
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► Please see **River, A16**

Water World

Bedrock channels under the GTA

Map shows topography of the bedrock which lies beneath the surface layers of land. Blue areas are the lowest, red the highest. A continuous channel (X-Y) appears to link Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario some 50-100 metres beneath the surface.



Stream's pressure blew a plume 15 metres high

► **River** From A1

Perplexed workers managed to cap the monitoring well. Then the caps on the old artesian wells in the park's north-east corner blew off.

When they finally managed to seal the caps on all the wells, water began running out of the hills in the surrounding area. Only then did the hydrogeologists and engineers working on it realize what they had tapped into.

"It's a very exciting discovery," said Bill Snodgrass, senior engineer on the city stormwater runoff project that prompted the well-capping. "It finally confirms what we've always suspected: that there is a bedrock valley here.

"To me, this represents one of the big improvements to understanding how things link up underground. Now what we're doing is trying to confirm exactly where the bedrock valley is located below Toronto."

"We knew this Laurentian river system came into Toronto, but we didn't exactly know where," said Steve Holysh, a hydrogeologist and member of the York-Peel-Durham-Toronto Groundwater Consortia, which is studying the urban environment's impact on groundwater quality.

"We knew it was somewhere to the east side of the Humber River, because bedrock shows up in the bottom part of the Humber," said Holysh, whose group sank the monitoring well.

"So we said, 'Let's put a well down here and we'll go to bedrock,' because there are very few wells in the city any more. And there was a driller on site who was going to decommission the two old wells, then drill our well. He brought in two rigs so he could do it at the same time.

"They had capped one well and were in the process of capping the other when ours blew. It shot water and gravel way up in the air. Yeah, you could say it was a surprise."

Initial tests showed the water is at least as drinkable as the city's treated water. But it tastes distinctly of iron, which means it can't be routed into the water system without costly filtration.

"But it's still a nice, cool drink of water," at a temperature of about 10C, said Bill Morrison, a hydrogeologist working as a consultant to the city. "The guys who were working here were drinking it when it was hot in August."

Evidence of the underground river's high mineral content remains on some rocks and concrete that it spilled over for a few weeks. The concrete and even some tree branches and pieces of lumber have been stained a deep blood red.

Holysh says a hydrogeologist studying the river decades ago dubbed it Laurentian, but he's not sure why.

"Depending on how deep it is, and what the infill materials are within the valley, it could be a significant conductor of groundwater on a regional scale," he said. "We've traced this valley up to Nobleton, to the west of Barrie, and then on up into Georgian Bay."

The research team is still trying to figure out if water is flowing into it directly from Georgian Bay, or, more likely, from the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Millions of years ago — long before the Great Lakes were formed — a watershed system existed in what is now Ontario, Morrison said. As the glaciers crept across the landscape and formed the Great Lakes, the old system was covered over, but water continues to move through it to this day.

The find began through work on two sedimentation ponds in High Park that had been used as mineral baths more than a century ago but eventually fell into disuse. At one point, the city's stormwater runoff system was routed through the former mineral baths and then into High Park's Spring Creek, which empties into Grenadier Pond.

As part of a larger initiative to clean up stormwater reaching the lake in the west end, it was decided to grow plants

on the bottom that would filter runoff. While draining ponds to do that work, the old artesian wells were discovered.

To comply with provincial regulations, the wells had to be capped, said Snodgrass. The group studying groundwater flow decided to sink its test well at the same time, since a drilling contractor would already be there.

"The fact that we had such highly pressurized water where we drilled was really surprising," said Holysh. "Being so close to the lake, our thinking was that there was a reasonable connection between it and this aquifer system.

"But with the pressure so high, it has to mean that the valley system isn't so connected to the lake. We think that late in the glaciation stage, the mouth of that valley, somewhere out in the lake, got plugged with fill material" and is not venting easily, he said.

One of the puzzles is just how long it would take water to move from its origins to High Park, Holysh said.

"If it rained up on the moraine thousands of years ago, it would take an awful lot of time to percolate through the ground and move downward.

"Groundwater systems don't move quickly — maybe a centimetre per year at the high end. By the time it makes its way down into this valley system and starts moving southward towards the lake, yeah, it would be thousands of years."