

Weekender

Comment

Markham is shafted by Region

Markham is being shafted by York Regional Council. By voting against giving Markham a fifth seat on council, the regional politicians want to deny proper representation to 120,000 residents of the town.

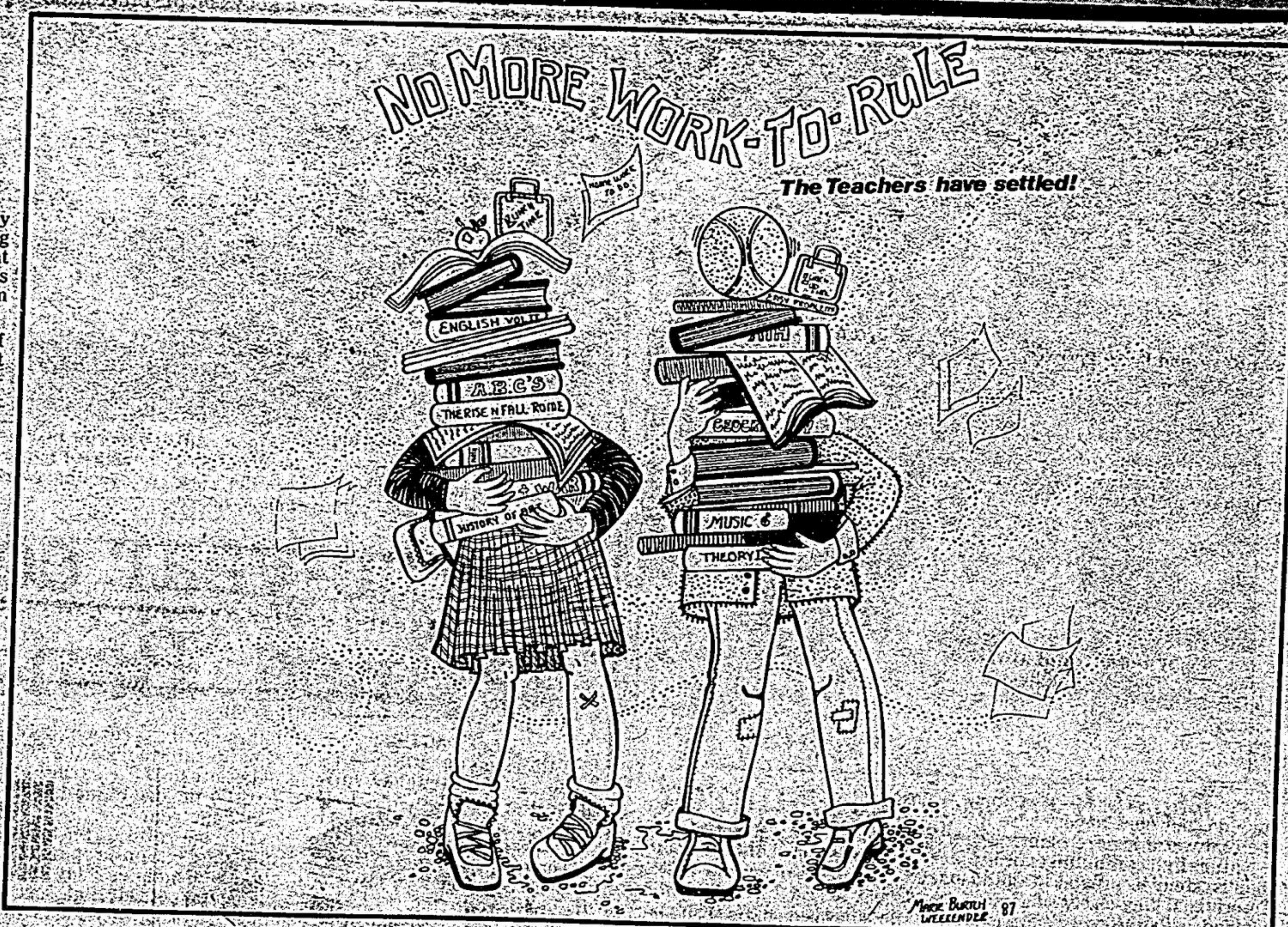
Markham makes up one-third of the population of York Region, yet has less than one quarter of the representatives — four out of 17 seats — on the council.

This is a travesty of the worst order — and the parochial politicians from northern York Region should be ashamed of themselves for their short-sightedness.

Even with the five seats, Markham is under-represented on York Regional Council. But at least the extra seat would help redress the current imbalance. Perhaps the southern three municipalities — Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill — should consider some other kind of arrangement, possibly pulling out of York Region and forming a separate region.

Even worse was Markham Regional Councillor Bud Bonner's decision to vote against Markham's extra seat. He's aiding and abetting the enemy on this one. The whole scenario belongs in a scene from Alice in Wonderland.

— Don Bernard



Vivian Forest inhospitable to guests

Rational thought, as it is applied to our efforts to extract every last ounce of exhilaration out of the first sunbath of spring, sometimes gets swept out the door with the stale dust of winter.

Now I thought I had it all figured out, or "thunk" through, so to speak. After all, when the weather suddenly turned summer last week, what could have had more appeal than a hike through the Vivian Forest up Highway 48? My flight over the width and breadth of York Region the previous day in a little four-seater aircraft had whetted my appetite for outdoor exploration. There were open spaces to be discovered down there, I declared, and forests with well marked paths to walk through. A chance to be at one with mother nature, on her terms.

My friend and sometime sidekick agreed, so off we drove with our box of Kentucky Fried Chicken, the picnic blanket, and a particularly plucky two-year-old niece of independent spirit. Picnics are for kids, let's remember. And as



neither of my fellow nature freaks had ever trod these parts before, I was put in charge of the expedition by default.

The plan was to head out from the car park area and walk for an hour or so in a circular manner so as to return quite ready to chow down. We would then strike out in a different direction for the second leg of the hike.

Five minutes into the trail, it became obvious that while summer may well have rendered all other parts of the world quite navigable, the forest was still mired in late winter. Running shoes were going to be more than a small liability here. Snowshoes

and rubber boots might have been more appropriate.

Where there wasn't snow or slush on the footpaths, there were mud puddles. And you know the immense attraction of mud puddles for a two-year-old. This two-year-old made it abundantly clear that she really didn't have any desire to be picked up; denying her the opportunity to slog through the slop.

She was overruled, which didn't add to her enjoyment of the afternoon one iota.

As we continued on, we became more and more concerned with sheer survival. Icy patches negotiated with sneakers on your feet, on a hill, with an infant in

your arms, are somewhat intimidating. "Are we having fun yet?" my friend asked with more than a hint of cynicism, having just completed a rather imperfect pirouette on an ice-covered corner. The abuse continued. "After all this, you better remember your way out of here, Stapley. I don't want to perish knee deep in snow while the rest of the world is lying in their lawn chairs soaking up the sun."

Now navigation has never come naturally to me. I could get lost on a merry-go-round, let alone a forest with paths of many turns and forks. The "circle" I had intended to follow was starting to feel more like a two-sided triangle. "Don't worry," I offered. "All these paths lead out eventually."

I suspected that my friend wasn't sold. When the trail we have been following suddenly met a dead end, I was sure of it. A few minutes later, when a group of horseback riders happened by, I swallowed my pride and nonchalantly asked them if this was the

path that lead to the parking lot. They pointed us in the exact opposite direction, towards the one route I had insisted would surely lead us to North Bay.

We finally made our way back to the car. We had a little strategy session, where I was deposed as tour guide, and it was decided to cancel the second leg of the undertaking, due to the unintended length of the first. We scouted the immediate area for a spot dry enough to drop the picnic blanket. We finally chose the front seat of the car.

Little Shauna was stripped of her wet shoes and socks, and muddy outfit. The two "adults", who should have been old enough to know better, stuck their feet out the window so the sun could dry them off.

And I etched one of those never to be forgotten mental notes that the next March stroll through the Vivian Forest would come complete with hip waders and a compass.

Economist & Sun

The Tribune

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Published every Saturday by Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing at 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ontario L3P 1M3. Tel. 294-2200.
Second class mail registration number 1247.
The Markham, Economist and Sun, published every Wednesday and Saturday at 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing group of suburban newspapers which includes: The Action Free Press, Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Aurora Banner, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Etobicoke Advertiser/Guardian, Georgetown Independent, Milton Champion, Mississauga News, Newmarket Era, Oakville Beaver, Oshawa/Whitby This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornton/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Stouffville Tribune, Topic News Magazine, Willowdale Mirror. Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing is a division of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd.
NATIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE — Metroland Corporate Sales, 493-1300.