

Comment & Opinions

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Send your letters
to the editor
to the address below

EDITORIAL

Beware of scams

It's as traditional as the first snowfalls of winter. Every season brings out its scam artists promising services for a downpayment, never to be seen again.

This winter is no exception, and already some York Region residents have been defrauded by opportunistic thieves who prey on gullible people, especially seniors.

This particular swindler went door to door in various communities during October, promising to plow driveways and walkways for the entire winter season for a deposit of \$100 or \$150.

After the first major snowfall hit Nov. 14, he failed to provide any snow removal services and did not return calls from customers or the police placed to his company.

York Regional Police know that at least one Markham resident was a victim of this scam, but have had a flood of calls from upset people from across York Region who were conned by the man.

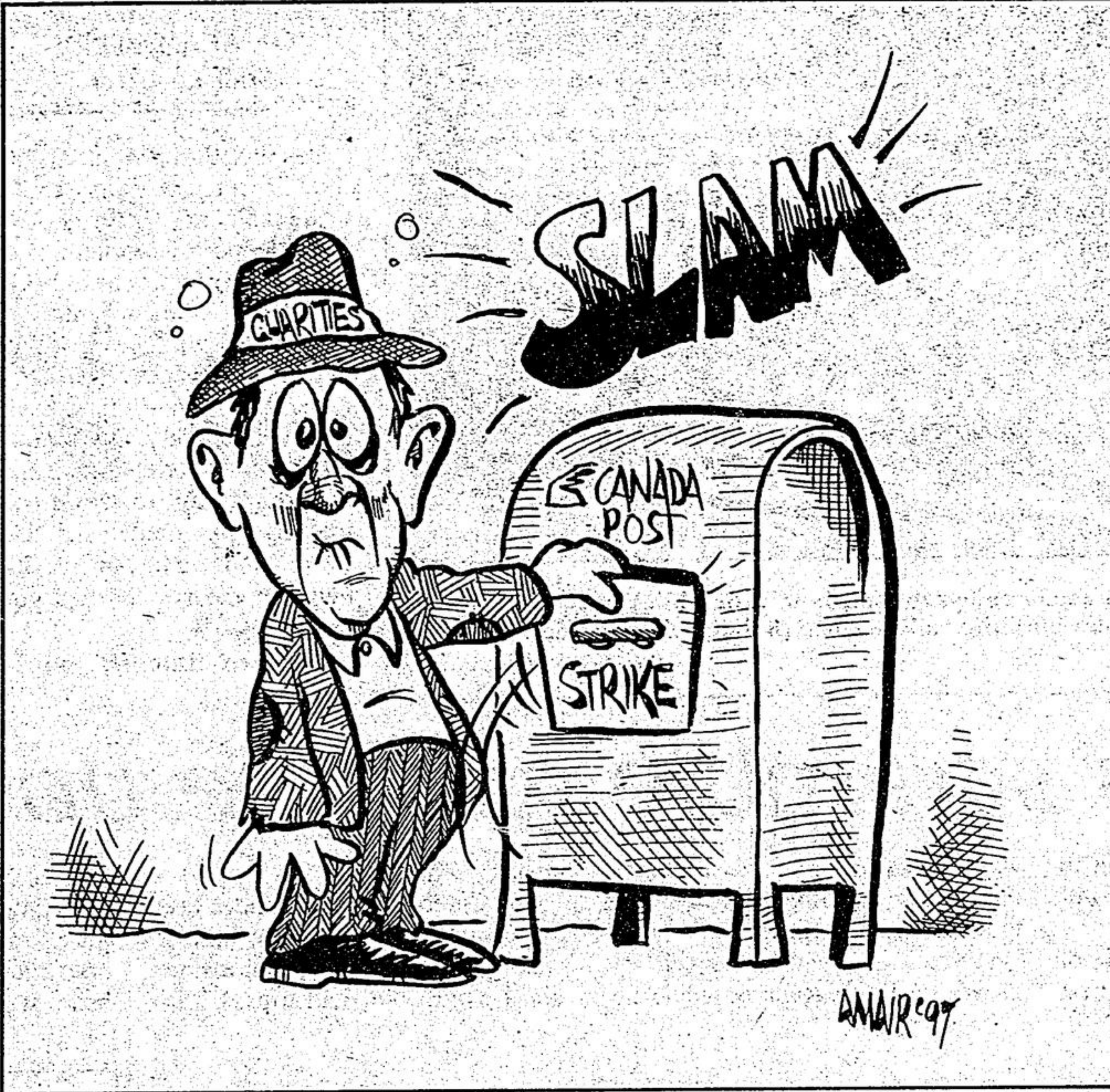
Police are reminding homeowners that they should never hand out cash or cheques for any services to people who show up on the doorstep.

Get a phone number and address, and check them both out to confirm they are legitimate.

Whenever possible, use services or companies which have been recommended by friends or neighbours.

The same warnings apply to telephone or internet sales, and especially giving out your credit card numbers.

Beware: For 'tis the season for some unscrupulous operators to rob the unsuspecting.



Warners messed with the wrong Brothers

You want to read some dirty words? I'll give you some dirty words. Levis. Nike. Coca Cola. McDonalds. Kellogg's.

Maybe not 'dirty' words exactly — but I could get in a lot of trouble for using them in vain. In fact, technically, I could be sued just for putting them on this page.

Those words are 'copyrighted' — which is to say they are "owned" by the corporations they represent. And if you think the big corporations are bluffing, try erecting a statue of, oh, say, Winnie The Pooh in your town square.

Some folks in White River, Ontario tried that a few years back. White Riverites figured they had a right. The original Winnie had been purchased as a bear cub by a soldier passing through White River on his way to Europe back in 1914. White River had a faceful of Disney lawyers before the foundation was laid. Turns out that Disney Corp owns the 'rights' to Winnie The Pooh.

Nobody can even use the name Winnie the Pooh without Disney's okay.

And while we're talking dirty here, I'll lay another bit of gutter talk on you. Casablanca. You thought it was a city in North Africa, right? Nope, and it's not even a movie starring Bogart and Bergman.

Officially and legally it is a copyrighted title owned by Warner Brothers. A bunch of funny guys in Hollywood found that out the hard way.

Back after the war they announced plans to make a movie called A Night In Casablanca. They were immediately served with a cease and desist order from the Warner Brothers lawyers. The word Casablanca was copyrighted, said the writ.

Unfortunately for the flesh-eating mouthpieces, they were tangling with a troupe that ate their kind for breakfast. The gang that wanted to make the movie A Night In Casablanca was the Marx Brothers. The lawyers from Warner Brothers were attempting to intimidate the legendary gagster siblings Groucho, Chico, Harpo et al.

Instead what the lawyers got was a let-



Basic Black

Arthur Black

ter from Groucho:

Dear Warners:
Apparently there is more than one way of conquering a city and holding it as your own. For example, up to the time that we contemplated making a picture, I had no idea that the city of Casablanca belonged to Warner Brothers.

However, it was only a few days after our announcement appeared that we received a long, ominous legal document warning us not to use the name "Casablanca."

I just can't understand your attitude. Even if they plan on re-releasing your picture, I am sure that the average movie fan could learn to distinguish between Ingrid Bergman and Harpo. I don't know whether I could, but I certainly would like to try.

You claim you own Casablanca and that no one else can use that name without your permission. What about Warner Brothers — do you own that, too? You probably have the right to use the name Warner, but what about Brothers?

Professionally, we were brothers long before you were.

Even before us, there had been other brothers — the Smith Brothers, the Brothers Karamazov, Dan Brouthers, an outfielder with Detroit, and "Brother, can you spare a dime?" This was originally "Brothers can you spare a dime," but this was spreading a dime pretty thin.

The younger Warner Brother calls himself Jack. Does he claim that too?

It's not an original name — it was used long before he was born. Offhand, I can think of two Jacks — there was Jack of "Jack and the Beanstalk" and Jack the Ripper, who cut quite a figure in his day.

This all adds up to a pretty bitter tirade, but I don't mean to. I love Warners — some of my best friends are Warner Brothers. I have a hunch that this attempt to prevent us from using the title is the scheme of some ferret-faced slyster serving an apprenticeship in your legal department.

Well, he won't get away with it! We'll fight him to the highest court! No pasty-faced legal adventurer is going to cause bad blood between the Warners and the Marxes.

We are all brothers under the skin and we'll remain friends until the last reel of A Night In Casablanca goes tumbling over the spool.

Signed,
Groucho Marx.

Groucho won the day. The Marx Brothers movie A Night In Casablanca was made and released in 1946 without a peep from the Warner Brother lawyers, who were obviously out-bluffed by Groucho's letter. Or perhaps they were just laughing too hard.

Noisy snowmobilers are a dangerous nuisance

Dear Editor,

With all the changes of the seasons that we experience this time of year, we on Church Street experience one very unpleasant change that perhaps residents on other streets don't suffer to the same degree.

I am speaking of the arrival of the people that choose to race up and down our street on snowmobiles.

The first of these people that I saw this year was Nov. 14 at about 4:30 p.m. racing back and forth up and down the street faster than any cars. This cowboy was not satisfied with that however, because he returned about 7 p.m. shouting and hollering as

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he went across our yard, through the garden, around our tree, back onto the road and down the street.

Ours was not the only yard he drove through, but I may have been the only person to call the police.

When the police officer arrived half an hour later, she came 30 seconds after this person had paid a second visit and I had jumped in front of him as he again crossed our front yard.

The only description I could give police was that he wore a green coat, a

ball cap, and was driving a black machine and towing a second person that was riding a child's sleigh.

We experience a flow of snowmobiles each evening after a snowfall and on weekends. They drive past with a great noise, heading for the conservation area at the top of our street.

This is annoying, illegal, and dangerous but, I do draw the line when they unthinkingly or deliberately damage personal property and drive across private yards.

Like any group, I guess snowmobilers have some of their number who damage the reputation of the rest.

Merlin Upton, Church Street

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