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THE TRIBUNE Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Prepare for winter

It could be us. The 'Big Freeze' which has devastated Montreal and eastern Ontario could happen to us tonight, this weekend or any time during the winter.

We take electricity so much for granted, how prepared would our communities be for such a storm and lack of power? Yet, it could happen any time this winter.

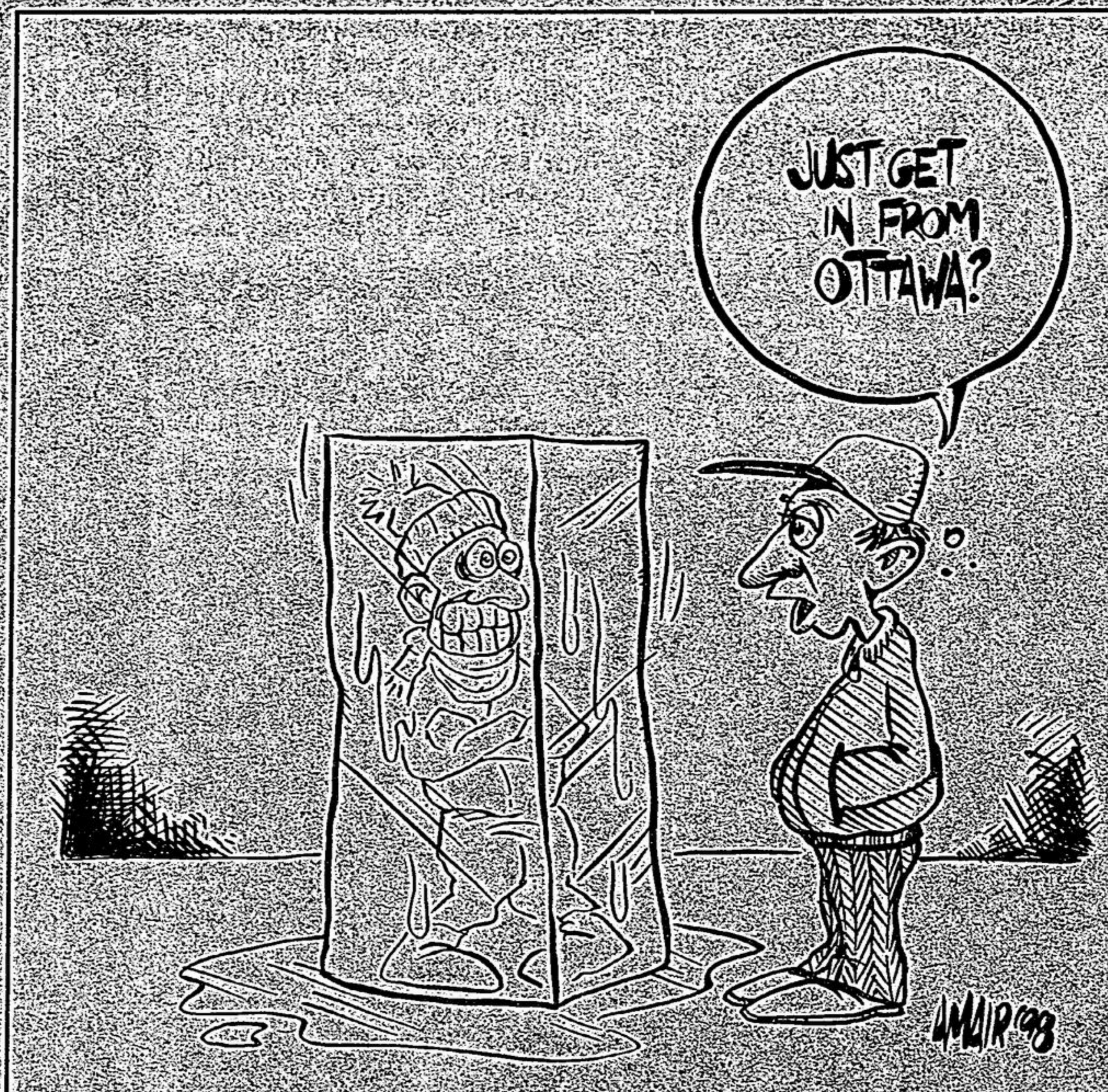
This disaster — which so far has claimed 10 lives and caused as much damage as the Manitoba floods last year — should force us to ask some far-reaching personal and collective questions.

On a personal level, are we ready to cope with bad weather? If we are commuters or are going on a long car trip, are cars equipped with emergency kits, blankets and snow tires?

Could we withstand a day or two without power in our homes? Is the fireplace clean with a ready supply of wood? Are candles, matches, flashlights and batteries available for light? On a community scale, local politicians should ensure their towns are ready to cope with weather disasters, which could become more frequent in coming years. More power lines should be buried underground. Community disaster plans should be dusted off and brought up to date.

On a provincial level, Ontario Hydro, our lawmakers and environmentalists should work together to ensure we have a steady supply of safe power. In the meantime, anyone with generators to loan to desperate farmers frozen in the dark during this emergency should call (416) 314-0538.

As one Montreal senior commented this week, "After all, this IS Canada." Canadians must be prepared for winter's worst and ready to help out in emergencies.



Memory of Malcolm still eggs wife on

I believe in reincarnation. I've had other lives.

I know. I have clues. First of all, I'm exhausted.

— Carol Siskind

Suppose there really is reincarnation. Life after death. What would you like to come back as? (Not that you'll be asked.)

It's a tough call. If you choose to make a curtain call as another species you want to make sure you opt for something near the top of the food chain. Not much point coming back as a butterball turkey or a veal calf.

But even the lords of nature have

their downsides. African lions stand a pretty good chance of spending their declining years padding around in a cement zoo cage — providing the poachers don't get them first.

Majestic eagles look pretty good soaring across the azure skies, but don't forget they have to live with fleas, lice, and large helpings of raw, frequently aged, fish.

It's a hard decision. You start out fantasizing about coming back as something dashing and romantic and superior, then you pause for a moment and start adding up all of the drawbacks.

Most of us do. Not Malcolm



Basic Black

Arthur Black

Eccles. Malcolm is — or rather, was — a British bloke who never for a moment doubted what he wanted to be reincarnated as in his Next Life.

What's more he pulled it off. Malcolm passed away last February after a complicated bout with bowel cancer, but his friends hardly had time to grieve. He was back in his Brixton kitchen with his wife before the month was out.

Actually, Malcolm now resides permanently on the kitchen window shelf in his old Brixton home.

Every morning before breakfast, his widow Brenda will pick him up bodily, turn him completely upside down and plop him back on the shelf.

Malcolm, you see, has come back as an egg timer. Or rather, Malcolm's particulars have. Make that particulars.

Malcolm was cremated at his own request and his ashes were subsequently sealed in a glass egg timer carefully hand-crafted to Malcolm's exacting specifications.

"I can't boil a soft egg to save my life," the widow Brenda explains. "Malcolm knew that and he suggested that, after he passed on, I should consider turning some of his ashes into an egg timer. That way he could help me and it would be a nice way of remembering him. That Malcolm. He had a good sense of humour which he kept right to the

end." I guess he did. Quite a kidder, that Malcolm. Clever, too. He's found a way to live forever. Or at least until the cat knocks him off the shelf.

Malcolm's story reminds me of a couple of Finlanders I knew back in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Einar and Charlie were brothers — ex-lumberjacks who spent a lot of time sitting around the Hoito restaurant drinking coffee, swapping lies and arguing incessantly about religion. Einar was a strict Lutheran. But not Charlie. Charlie was an atheist. An unbeliever.

They would argue back and forth for hours. Einar would talk about the Afterlife. Charlie would reply the Finnish equivalent of "we pass this way but once."

Einar would turn beet red, stomp his bush boots and shake a bony finger at Charlie. "You'll be sorry when you die," Einar would tell him.

Sure enough, one day Charlie choked to death on a fish bone. The night after his funeral, Einar awoke from a deep sleep to hear a familiar voice calling "Einar! Einar!"

"Ch-ch-charlie???" whispered Einar in disbelief. "Where are you?"

"You'd never believe it, Einar," said the voice. "It's beautiful here, soft green meadows, lots of food... and sex! Sex in the morning, sex in the afternoon, sex in the evening! Sex whenever I feel like it — and by golly I feel like it all the time."

"Gosh — so that's what heaven is like," said Einar.

"Who said anything about heaven," cried Charlie. "I'm a rabbit in Australia."

Food Bank appreciates town's generosity

Dear Editor,

This letter is for the people of Stouffville.

How can we thank you all for your terrific support of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank, especially over the past Christmas Season?

Where do we begin — that's the problem. There were so many generous, thoughtful people who gave of their time, money, gifts, food and candies — you name it!

We appreciated all the food donations from the school children and their teachers, the various clubs in Stouffville who support the Food Bank, the many businesses, church groups, private donations, anonymous donations, coupons for Christmas trees,

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apples from a local farmer — the list goes on.

On behalf of our clients and the volunteers who work at the Food Bank, we appreciate your generosity. It makes our job so much easier and we want you to know we do appreciate you all.

H. Green

On behalf of the
Executive of the WSFB

P.S. — One little girl wanted me to thank "whoever" gave her a gift at the Food Bank. She said it was a game, and it was really fun to play. I said I would try and thank "whoever."

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about us

News
(905) 640-2100
Retail sales
(905) 640-2100
Classifieds
(905) 640-2874
Distribution
(905) 640-2100
Fax
(905) 640-5477
E-Mail
thetrib@istar.ca
6244 Main St.,
Stouffville, Ont.
L4A 1E2

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