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Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Cards cut fraud

It's about time a provincial government took action against health care fraud in this province.

And there is no denying it exists, considering the number of previous government attempts in the past to curb abuse. Instead, however, of grasping the problems, politicians have paid mere lip service to the situation - afraid to step on toes or derail a social gravy train that has been running for far too long.

In the past 10 years, many people have been receiving care from doctors and emergency rooms without proper health cards or with identification that is either stolen or forged.

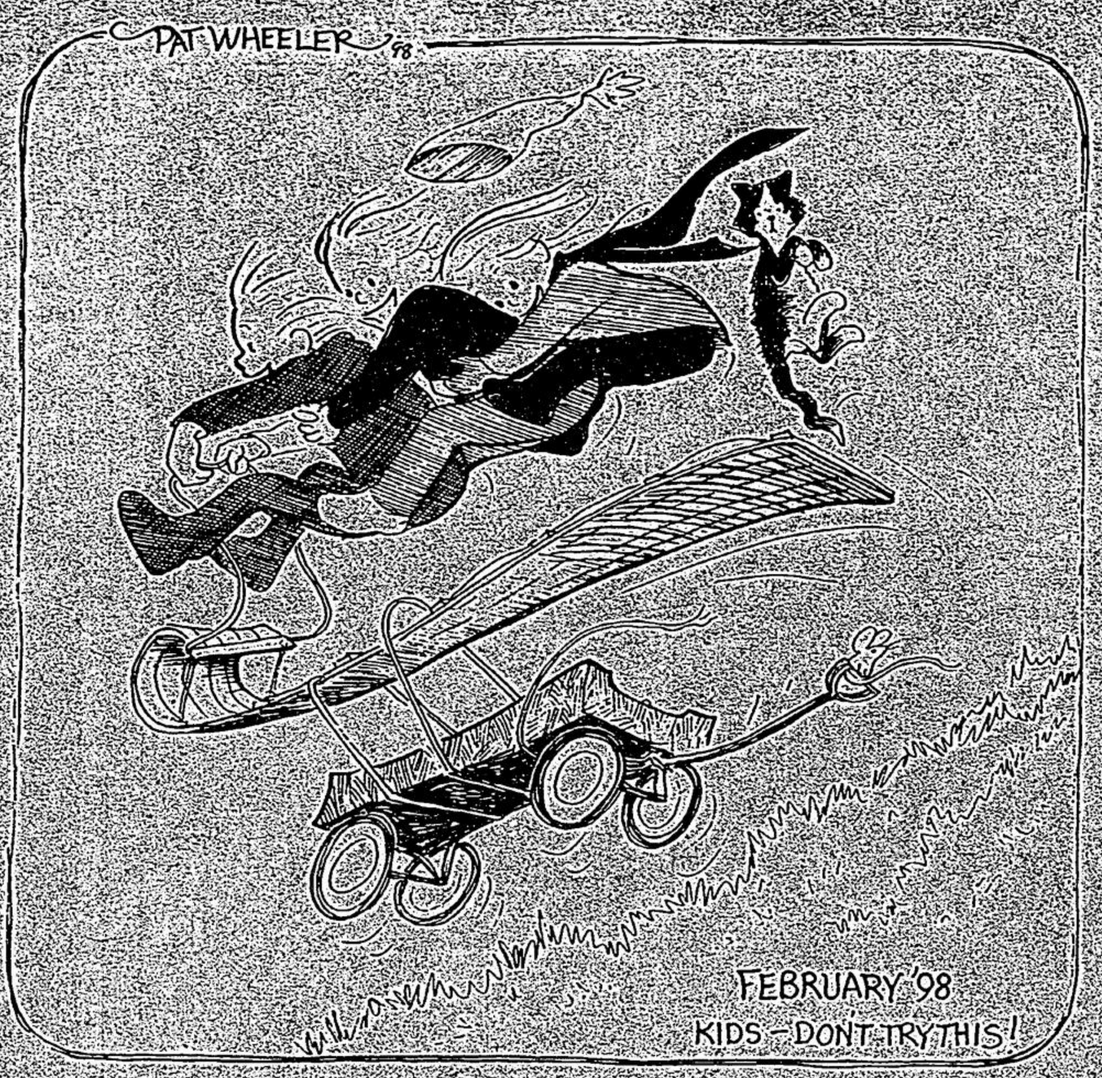
Universal health care is a privilege many countries, including the United States, don't enjoy. But with so many people (in some cases, doctors) abusing the system, a change in the way health care is tracked in Ontario is long overdue.

The Tories have just announced a major crackdown on health care abuse by enforcing the use of new cards which will be virtually impossible to forge.

This is a move to curb a $285-million-a-year loss to the Ministry of Health.

And it couldn't come sooner, as far as the government is concerned. The Tories, who are often criticized for a perceived lack of social conscience, know they must eliminate abuses of social services in order to justify the cuts they have made to those programs. It will also mean that people who truly need social assistance will receive it, and those who are abusing the system will not.

Governments in the past have rarely taken charge of such losses to its social ministries and taxpayers are fed up with paying for that irresponsibility.



Kindness overwhelmed when tragedy struck

Kibble's Bits

Tracy Kibble

It's an indescribable feeling to stand at the end of your driveway and watch all your belongings and everything you've worked for go up in flames and smoke.

Bob and I stood in the mud and the slush in the morning of Feb. 18 as firefighters chopped holes in our roof and rustled past us to the trucks. They were doing their job and we were watching our house burn down.

It's a helplessness only death can top. It's a tragedy only others who have experienced such loss can fully understand.

It's a devastation that only begins to sink in much later when you start to remember all that is now gone.

I remember the phone call as it came to my office that Wednesday morning from my father. My friend and boss, Andrew Mair, drove me to my house as I clutched my purse. He tried to calm me down, but I knew it was bad.

I remember approaching our road and already smelling smoke one mile away. My heart started to pound and I clung at the thought once more that it must all be a big mistake.

All my children had was gone, our memories of their infancy and growing up blackened and crumpled on the wet, stinking floor that was once our home.

I remember Andrew and his wife, Kim standing beside us in the driveway and asking us what we needed.

It's a question I'll never forget.

"What can we get you?" asked Kim. "Please let us help." And from the first time we left our beautiful lakefront property I realized I didn't own a toothbrush, deodorant or even underwear.

And the next day, when despair pounded in my head something amazing and wonderful happened.

People came to our rescue. People I work with and eat lunch with, people I have never laid eyes on and people I used to know came forward with the most tremendous flow of donations. Blankets, clothes, coats, heaps of stuffed animals, toys, books, movies, baby equipment, shampoo, pillows, fruit bagels and alarm clocks.

These people were - and will always be - our angels. Without their help, we couldn't have coped and because of their generosity and kindness we have gained the most important thing of all - faith and friendship, love and trust.

The building and the contents we can replace over time. But the caring from family and friends can never be replaced.

Thank you to my best-in-the-world family, all the staff at St. John's in Uxbridge, to all my friends at *The Tribunes* and *The Markham Economist and Sun*, to the ladies at the consignment shop in Stouffville and to everyone at *The Mirror* and *The Etobicoke Guardian*. Bob and I, Kody and Kendall are eternally grateful for everything you've done during this tough time.

A recipe for happiness in the '90s

Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

Last weekend Mr. Wallethead and I went shopping at his behest.

Normally his eyes glaze over at the mere mention of the s-word, but on this occasion we underwent a strange role reversal. The reason he was agog with enthusiasm was that we were bound for a cornucopia of office supply stores.

Our first port of call had all the ambiance and charm of an aircraft hangar. T

here was an aisle devoted entirely to file folders of every imaginable size, shape and design. Elsewhere, you could buy anything from anti-glare screen covers to those plastic mats which protect your carpets, but which can send you clean across the room at breakneck speed should you go into reverse with undue exuberance after inputting a particularly pithy line.

We were there because my significant other had a coupon for $10 off purchases in excess of $50. We spent quite a while judging the relative merits of scratch pads, fax paper and envelopes for his home office.

All I needed was an ink cartridge for my Macintosh printer, but despite the acres of shelf space and the immense diversity of products, it transpired that this item was too exotic to be included in the store's inventory.

I began to realize what I'd put my husband through on the countless occasions he had accompanied me on shopping trips for clothes. As I wandered past a mind-boggling array of desktop accessories, I fondly recalled a column by Linwood Barclay about daycare centres for men at British shopping emporiums.

While their female counterparts shopped till they dropped the guys could watch TV, slurp on a pint or play a leisurely game of pool. Of course, some women probably adore shopping at office supply stores, but I am not among them and would have welcomed the opportunity to sip on a beverage and flip through a vapid magazine with a social redemption quotient of nil.

Astonishing deals on spiral notebooks notwithstanding, this was not my milieu. It was a case of a Type Z personality being imprisoned with a whole warehouse full of Type A's. Many were deep in conversation on their cellphones, no doubt wheeling and dealing with other hotshots, while they hunted for colour-coordinated paper clips in an impressive display of multi-tasking.

Happiness in the nineties means never having to leave the office. People can reach you in the car, at the opera, at the zoo or in the bath. No longer constrained by a puny 9 to 5 schedule, you can start work at the crack of dawn and continue through dinner and into the weekend.

Sometimes it's hard to tell whether the beeping in your ears comes from the fax machine or the microwave, as you attempt to zap dinner between reviewing contracts and kicking the cat. You can't leave it all behind at the office because you live there.

On the bright side, Mr. Wallethead picked up a nice desk with hunter green accents, which goes perfectly with the wallpaper. And if you can't reach me on the weekend, it's because I've unplugged the phone.

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Patricia Pappas
Publisher

Andrew Mair
Editor-In-Chief
Tracy Kibble
Editor

Debra Weller
Director of Advertising
Mike Rogerson
Retail Advertising Manager
Stacey Allen
Classified Manager

Barry Goodyear
Director of Distribution

Vivian O'Neil
Business Manager

Pamela Nichols
Operations Manager

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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