

Bring on teen 'smoke busters,' say store owners

JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Reporter

Stouffville's retailers aren't afraid of the new smoke busters.

Soon, about four teenagers, between the ages of 15 and 17, will be employed to help the regional health department catch merchants selling cigarettes to minors.

But the crackdown hasn't phased one local retailer. "It's fine by us," said Ahmed Arman of the Stouffville Variety and Smoke Shop.

The family-run business does everything it can to keep cigarettes out of the hands of teenagers, said Arman.

Posters, carrying anti-smoking messages and details about the tobacco laws, are well posted in the Ringwood Drive store. "It's against the law. We know it. I don't smoke. It's a dumb thing to do," said Arman.

The plan to hire the "test shoppers" is about to be



David Monaghan, owner of Stouffville's 1001 Variety. "Among males in the same group, there was an increase from 22.5 per cent to 26.4 per cent between 1993 and 1997," said Unsworth.

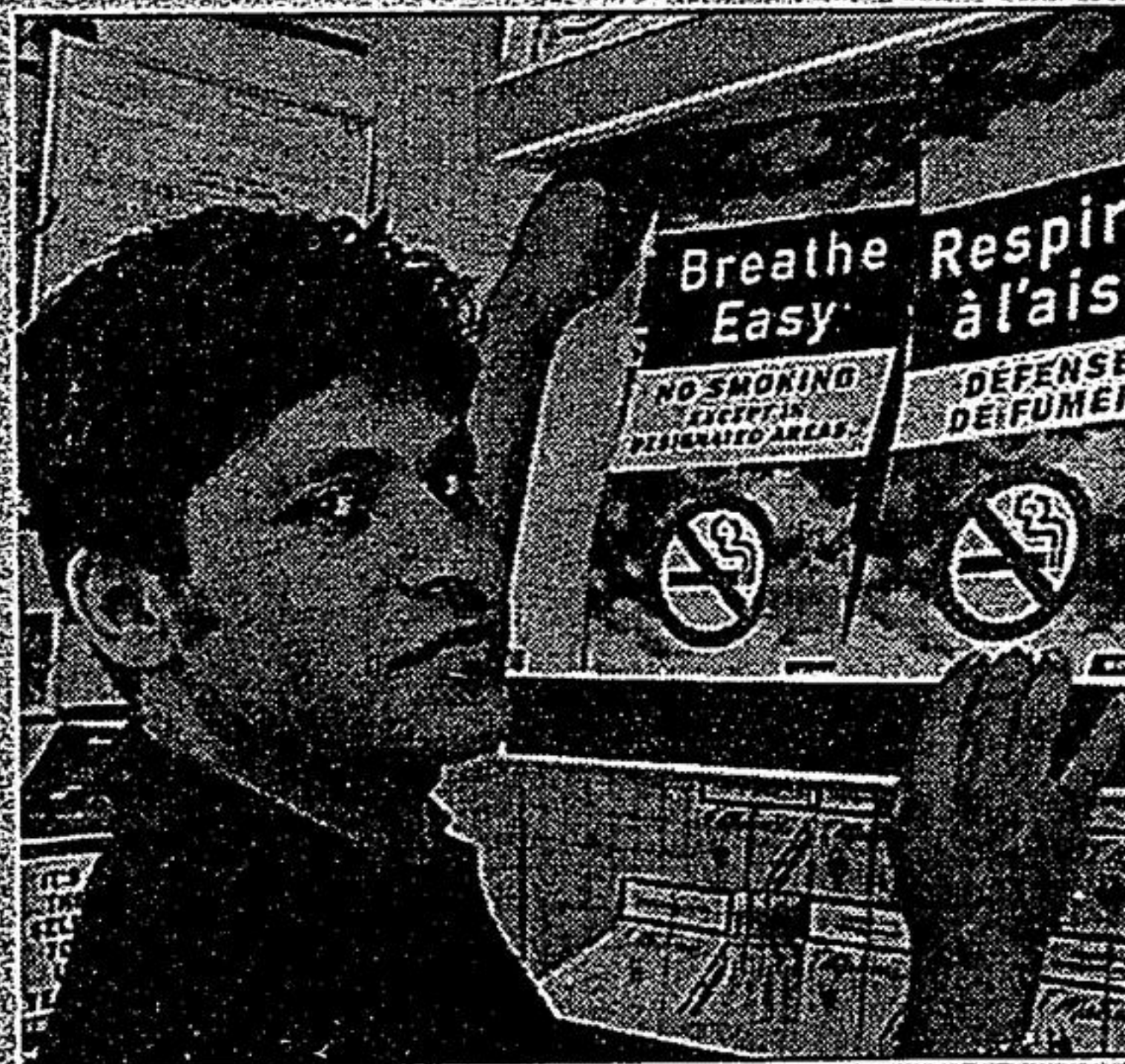
Unsworth is pointing out that smoking is the number one preventable cause of death for Canadians. In 1995, smoking was responsible for an estimated 23 per cent of all Canadian deaths, 35 per cent of all cancer deaths, 77 per cent of all chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 90 per cent of all lung cancer deaths, Unsworth reported.

Last year *The Tribune*, with the help of a 17-year-old, carried out a sting operation to see if minors could buy smokes in Stouffville. Results of the test showed that it is very easy for a minor to buy tobacco in local stores - the minor bought cigarettes in nine out of 10 stores in Stouffville. The only spot refusing to sell cigarettes to *The Tribune's* test shopper was the local IGA.

IGA manager Phil Barker said he breathed a "sigh of relief" when he read that his staff was abiding by the law. "And I've let them know that these people (test shoppers) may drop in," said Barker.

Merchants are, once again, reminded that if they're convicted twice of selling or supplying tobacco products to anyone under the age of 19, they will no longer be allowed to sell tobacco in their store.

As well, retailers are being encouraged to explain the law to employees.



Ahmed Arman of the Stouffville Variety and Smoke Shop.

finalized, said Kathy Unsworth of the York Region Health Services.

The test shoppers and the tobacco enforcement officers will conduct surveillances and complete compliances and enforcement checks across York, including in Stouffville.

If a retailer is caught selling or supplying tobacco to a youth test shopper, the retailer will be charged and face a maximum fine of \$10,000 in keeping with the Tobacco Control Act.

David Monaghan, owner of Stouffville's 1001 Variety, wants health officials to switch its priority and target alcohol.

"Why don't they take issue with alcohol? It kills more people and hurts more families than cigarettes," said Monaghan. "I agree with this crack down but I wish they'd do more about the booze problem."

When local health officials learned that smoking among teens is still on the rise despite warnings of heavy fines against retailers, the latest action was initiated.

Female smokers aged 12 to 19 increased from about 22 per cent to 29 per cent in the past six years, a report showed.



PAINT FEST: From left, Pamela, 7, Elizabeth, 9, and Graham Brooker, 5, ham it up for the camera with their painted faces and colorful balloons during last weekend's Strawberry Festival celebrations on Main Street.

Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Lobby feds: Landon

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There are almost as many cell calls today than there were total emergency calls in pre-9/11 days. But even then, an operator could get a location through the open line.

"We need legislation in Canada to deal with that," he said. "We need somebody to act as a lead in this at the federal level."

But part of Canada's problem is one of jurisdiction. The CRTC, Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission, regulates the communi-

cations industry, while Canada's Industry and Trade Department regulates cellular technology. Neither appears to be taking responsibility for this particular issue, Landon said.

At a conference last week in Cincinnati, Landon requested the US-based National Emergency Number Association create a special 911 chapter so Canada can better lobby politicians here.

"This can all be regulated by the feds," Landon said. "But no one's listening."

Lake health talk July 8

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around bringing the community together to focus on the needs of the lake and the surrounding area," said Watson.

Mike Walters, of the LSRCA, will be the guest speaker at the July 8 information meeting being held by the Friends of Musselman's Lake.

Walters will talk to residents about lake and shoreline restoration and will be on hand to discuss other issues pertaining to kettle lakes and their health.

Musselman's Lake is no stranger to Walters, who has tested the water and has studied algae and storm water runoff effects there for many years. In the early 90s, Walters and a LSRCA colleague took a canoe tour of the lake to study the effects of storm water runoff and algae blooms.

Stouffville engineering and planning director Tom Parry said the town has also been keeping an eye on lake quality. In the town's Official Plan passed in 1990, the community known as Ballantyne/Musselman's Lake can be allowed to grow by 1,000 to 3,200, with a limited "mainly in-filling" growth permitted directly around Musselman's Lake.

Parry said since the communal water system has been initiated for the two hamlets, the town has improved substantially the culvert run-off effects to the lake.

To better control the problem, the town has installed infiltration pipes which filter out runoff before it can enter the water, Parry said. The meeting gets underway Wednesday, July 8 at 7 p.m. at Cedar Beach Club House at the end of Cedarvale Boulevard.



IGA Manager Phil Barker.

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