

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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### EDITORIAL

## Tough stand against graffiti makes sense

**Grffiti**  
Consider it art or call it vandalism — there is no in between.

By definition — a rude scribbling on a wall — graffiti has been tied to urban decay, a blight on the landscape.

But is it a crime?

Markham Ward 2 Councillor Randy Barber thinks so. And he wants the community's help to keep his town graffiti-free.

"I'm mad and angry," Barber said last week at the German Mills historical marker, which had been defaced by a paint-wielding vandal.

"Everywhere there is a blank wall, it turns into a palette for these people — how long are we going to put up with it?" Barber asked.

Markham isn't the only York Region community scrambling to remove graffiti from public and private property.

In Stouffville, Mayor Wayne Emmerson has offered a \$500 reward for information that leads to an arrest in any act of vandalism.

It's difficult to disagree with Barber's anti-graffiti stand. Painting public and private property, regardless of the artistic quality, is vandalism.

The perpetrators may consider their work socially acceptable, but to a majority of residents, graffiti amounts to nothing more than an eyesore.

The cost of its removal doesn't come cheap, either. Restoring the German Mills historical marker, for instance, cost the town \$250.

But this isn't about money. Nor is it about freedom of expression. It's about respect for public and private property — an attitude that starts in the home.

"These aren't senior citizens doing this stuff," Barber said. "It's kids with cans of spray paint and markers in their knapsacks, running around and not getting caught."

"Without being too hard on kids or their parents, we have to realize what some of these kids are doing as they roam the streets."

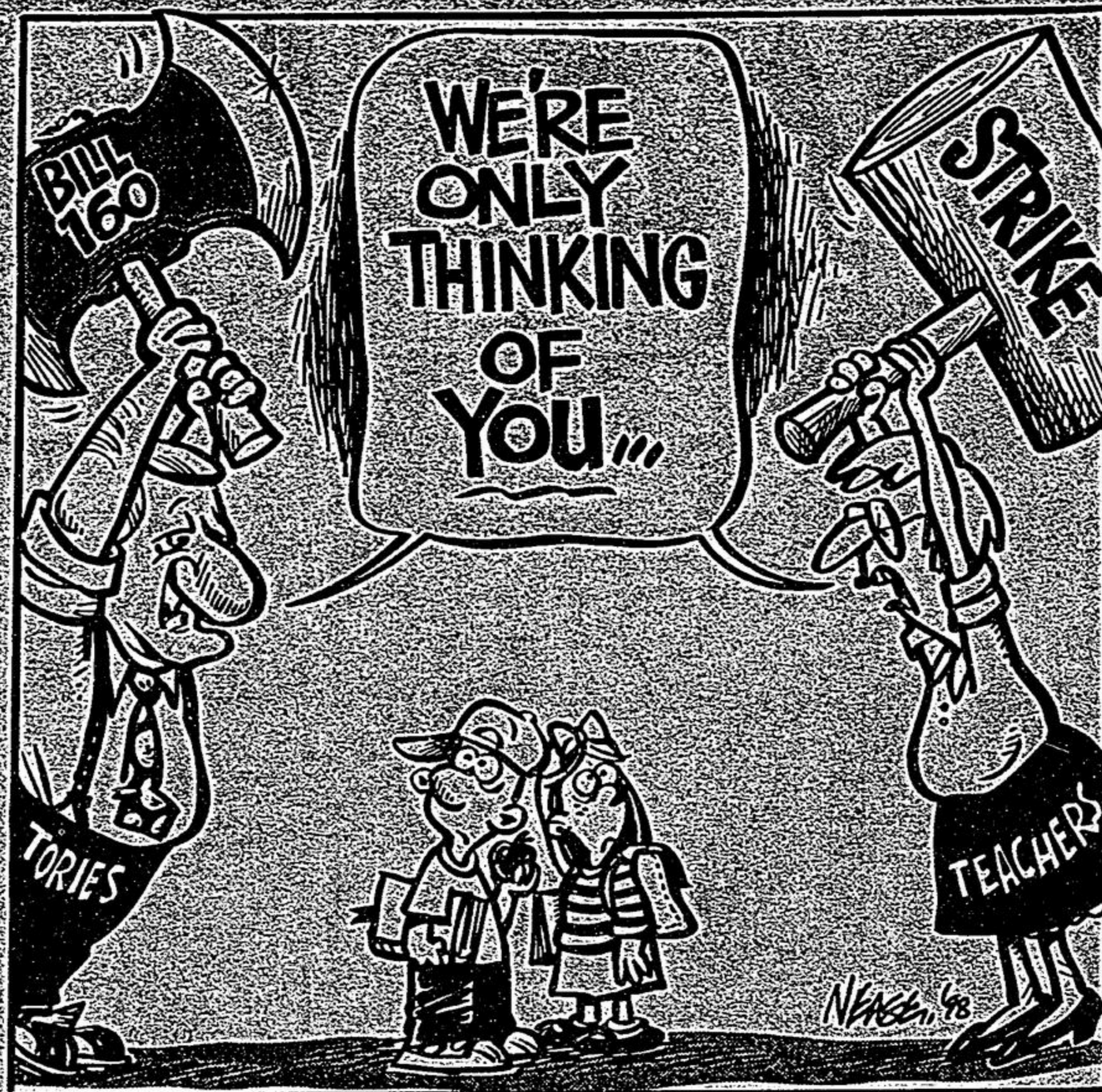
If teenagers and young adults really want to express their artistic abilities, use a piece of paper or draw a poster — anything that would entice, not offend, a potential employer.

## CHEERS & JEERS

■ **CHEERS** to regional chairperson Bill Fisch, who sits on GO Transit's board of directors, for advocating the need for improved transit service in York Region. The municipality has contributed \$20,000 to a study to help convince the federal and provincial governments to help fund GO capital projects.

■ **JEERS** to York Region's two school boards, their secondary school teachers and the provincial government for placing students in the middle of another messy round of contract negotiations. With the start of school less than a week away, thousands of York Region high school students still don't know if they will be reporting to class. There must be a better way to solve contract disputes.

# OPINION



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Thanks, taxpayers for cash

Thank you Whitchurch Stouffville council and fellow taxpayers

Last night Preston Lake Country Club Inc. (PLCC) held an extraordinary board meeting at Vandorf Hall and extraordinary it was.

The board members passed unanimously a motion to spend \$7,000 of our road maintenance fees on obtaining an opinion from a lawyer as to whether or not we are legally obligated to maintain our private road.

This amount is about 30 per cent of our total budget which should be used for road repairs, which it desperately requires.

PLCC has only been maintaining these roads for more than 50 years, but somehow it is now an issue as to whether or not we should.

The motion was passed despite strong opposition by the PLCC.

Not to worry, because as one resident pointed out the town gave us money once before to improve our road and we will be able to get more money again.

So I will sleep at night, knowing that we can spend our road maintenance budget on lawyers fees, and the taxpayers of Whitchurch Stouffville will reimburse us. So thank you in advance for your generosity and supporting our private roads.

LESLEY EVEREST

#### We must save our lake

I would like to respond to the letter entitled, 'Don't squander tax dollars on Musselmann's Lake' in the Thursday, Aug. 27 edition of The Tribune.

Addressing the first issue, is this a public concern which our councillor should address? Yes. The quality of Musselmann's Lake goes beyond a simple lessening of aesthetics and pleasure by recreational users. This is an environmental issue of far reaching implications. Just ask the people whose drinking water is affected by pollution to the kettle lakes. The stewardship of our earth is far too important to be ignored due to fiscal restraint and increased taxation. We are not omnipotent of this earth, we are but part of its life.

There is a large beach known as Cedar Beach open to the public. Everyone has the right and privilege to walk on the sand, play in the water and enjoy the beauty. I am quite certain the owners are responsible to pay taxes as are each and every homeowner who lives in the area. As the people of Stouffville are entitled to a portion of tax dollars spent to address their concerns, so are the residents of Musselmann's Lake.

The irony of this issue is that it returns to an us versus them theme with alarming regularity. Where do you suppose the lake residents purchase their groceries, gas, building materials, take-out food? How many are employed in town? How many attend church and send their children to school in town? We are very much a part of the same community. We may not live right beside each other but we are neighbours. People think it is wonderful and noble to save a rainforest in South America. But what could be more noble and wonderful than a unified effort to heal a very serious environmental concern in your own community.

MARGARET DOYLE



Brenda Larson

## Businesses deserve break on tax reform

If the Aurora business community is a microcosm of York Region's business community, then we should all brace ourselves for some high drama.

Some Aurora business people have been hit with commercial property tax bills that are almost double what they have been paying.

They stormed their council chambers last Wednesday night to express their concern about being able to continue to do business in their communities, faced so suddenly with such dramatic tax burdens.

Successful car dealer Jim McAlpine, who employs roughly 100 people at his auto campus, was furious about his bill, which went to \$128,000 — double what he paid last year.

"I'm normally a pretty happy guy, but I've got to tell you now, we're pretty discouraged," he said.

### ISN'T FAIR

For the most part, these business people are realists.

They recognize the value of their commercial properties and, while they don't like it, they recognize they should be paying an appropriate tax rate on that property.

After all, fair is fair.

But what isn't fair is the rapidity with which local councils are moving to pass on the tax increases that are resulting from province-wide reassessment.

The province says councils have the wherewithal to make the impact less dramatic — they can phase in the increases, for example. But the councils argue it isn't fair to use a phase-in process if, for instance, some businesses are getting lower rates.

I believe that most business people, while they really hate the thought of paying higher taxes, would more readily accept paying their share if they had a period of adjustment.

Don't tell me on Thursday that I owe you \$10 and then advise me on Friday that, from now on, it's \$20 and that I have to pay you right away.

But tell me that I owe you \$10.50, then \$11, then \$11.50 and I can make the adjustments in my life to ensure my ability to pay and my ability to stay in business.

Isn't that what's most important here — making sure our business community can continue to provide jobs and services to citizens?

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