

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Replica guns should be banned

York Regional Police officers are understandably worried about replica handguns being sold in the area.

In this case, the 'toy' guns fire soft air or soap pellets. As the name implies, the replicas look like real weapons.

How on earth a police officer could ever be expected to tell the difference between a replica and real gun is beyond our comprehension.

Anyone who brandishes a replica handgun is simply asking to be shot.

If something isn't done quickly to stop the sale of these weapons, the odds on the police shooting someone with a replica gun will just keep getting higher.

It won't be a question of if some fool is going to be killed by police, it's a question of when it will happen.

And the most frightening aspect about the availability of these replica guns is that they are being sold to youngsters.

Already police have had to deal with teenagers using the replicas.

Last week in Markham, a mother took three of the guns away from teens who had been firing them in the neighbourhood. We applaud her courage and civic responsibility. But imagine what might have happened if police had been called to the scene with the understanding that it was a gun call. It could have been tragic.

In another case last week, police responded to just such a gun call in Thornhill only to discover a 13-year-old boy standing on the street with a replica pellet gun. That youngster should be thanking his lucky stars that he's still alive.

The kid's parents should also be furious that their son was able to buy such a monstrous toy. It could have killed him.

Any merchant who would sell a replica gun to a teenager has no right operating a business. Somebody's blood will soon be on their hands.

York police say they would like some tough laws to restrict the age at which these guns can be purchased.

We suggest much stronger sanctions. These weapons should be banned period. They serve no purpose other than to give criminals a weapon.

There are already severe penalties for possessing a replica handgun while committing a crime.

What we need now is laws which also punish those who sell these offensive devices to our children. And we need those laws now.

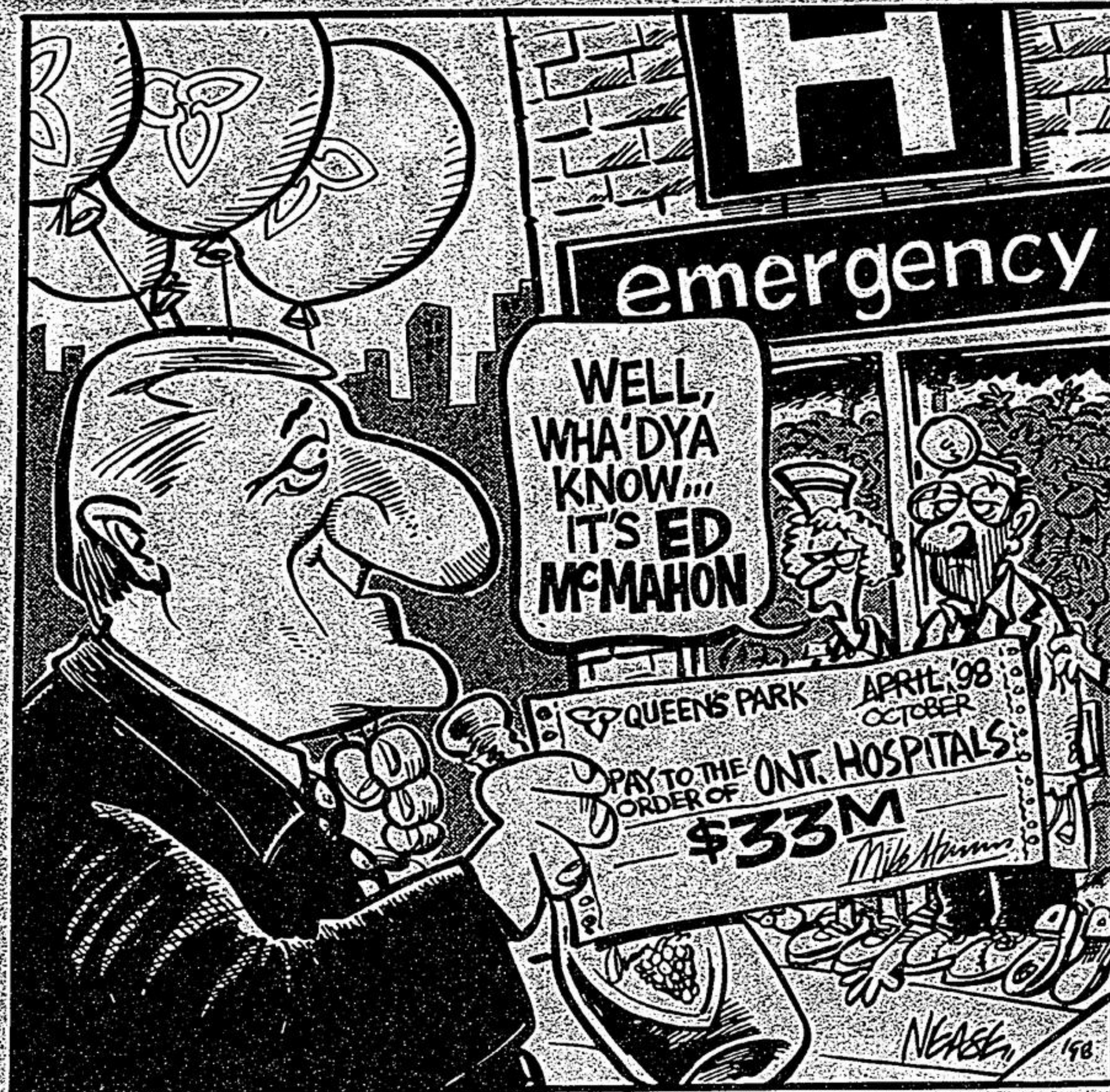
CHEERS & JEERS

■ **CHEERS:** To the Town of Richmond Hill for demanding the province offer financial help and backing to save the Oak Ridges Moraine from being swallowed by development. The province must initiate strict guidelines to outline sensitive lands.

■ **JEERS:** To the province for its proposal to charge for parking at government buildings, such as the Newmarket courthouse. Police Chief Julian Fantino is furious his officers will be made to pay for parking and is threatening to lighten up security to make up the financial shortfall.

■ **JEERS:** To the Catholic school board for pussy footing around its responsibility to make up for lost time due to a three-week teachers' strike last month. The time must be made up, so bite the bullet, and get on with it. Everyone is sick of the bickering.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Readers should wake up

Not so long ago, *The Tribune* printed an article along with an interview about the Stouffville Ambulance Service and its manager, Pete Carroll.

In the article Carroll expressed his concerns about maintaining adequate ambulance coverage for the town. He brought to our attention, the increased call volume, and the need to add extra staff and a vehicle to meet those demands.

I fully expected comments from editors and readers alike. Not so. It appears that everyone has a laid back, no caring attitude. Should this concern not be addressed, allow me to predict the future.

Someone in town will lose their life because an ambulance was not present to service his needs in time.

When this worse case scenario happens, who will the newspapers and readers blame? Better not be Carroll.

(Premier Mike) Harris is a likely candidate because of Liberal-biased media. Myself, I blame you, the reader. You should be lobbying town council to alleviate this very serious potential problem. Demand that your hard-earned tax dollars be diverted from that other emergency service and used for ambulance requests.

Remember last summer? That other emergency service spent hundreds of dollars to rescue a dog. I would prefer that money be spent on the ambulance service and the health and safety of town citizens.

L. WILLIAM KEEPING

Airport would destroy region as fast growing

We oppose the proposed Pickering lands airport designation. The construction of an airport would destroy the agricultural, environmental and residential properties within the Durham and York areas. The land and owners have existed in some cases for well over 150 years and an airport would encroach on their right to reside and enjoy their properties.

Residents would lose their way of life and would most likely be displaced.

The land would become contaminated, and we would suffer from air and noise pollution. Land values would plunge. The creation of an airport to satisfy the Greater Toronto Area's bid for the 2008 Olympics is disputable. The expense to the province, the regions of Durham and York, save the individual taxpayers would be enormous.

The infrastructure created by the airport, namely hotels, companies and low cost transient housing would be followed by strip clubs, prostitution, drugs, break and enters and other criminal acts to support the trade. The region would hence no longer be known as the fastest growing region.

The proposed airport lands were disposed of over 20 years ago for the above reasons. In addition, Pearson International Airport is only operating at about one half of its capacity.

BERNIE MACDONALD

NATALIE O'ROURKE
CLAREMONT



Brenda Larson

Rape victims must demand system change

When Jane Doe — a woman who fought a 12-year legal battle with Toronto police, arguing they used her as bait for a serial rapist — said last week that rape victims should just forget about reporting the crime, I was certain I misunderstood the message.

This is a woman who successfully argued that she and the women in her neighbourhood should have been advised about a serial rapist in their midst, should have been warned about the potential danger.

She obviously cared enough about that flaw in the system to fight 12 years to see it corrected.

The message she sent to all women during her battle with the system was one of true character — she wasn't going to give up until she found justice and fairness. She won.

But the message she sent last week doesn't reflect that — it's not one of persistence, of determination, of strength.

It's sad that Jane Doe's horrible experience with justice seems to be an accurate portrayal of what can happen to the victim.

The message tells us to give up, to acknowledge that the system works against victims and to forget about correcting it or using it to our benefit. It's a message from someone who has been exhausted by her own experiences.

Women who report rapes, she says, are then 'raped' again by an uncaring system. They're treated unfairly and insensitively by police, by lawyers, by the justice system. It's such a sad message, one that needs changing.

It's bad enough that women can't take a walk in their neighbourhood at night, that they're virtually under curfew, because of unknown threats to their safety.

Must we also throw up our hands in defeat, acknowledging that, as victims, we will be victimized by those who are in positions to help us?

It's sad that Jane Doe's horrible experience with justice seems to be an accurate portrayal of what can happen to the victim.

But unless we demand help when we are victimized, the system will never change.

We can't give up.

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