

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Municipalities must ready their parachutes

"We're being pushed off a cliff. This is just about which tool we'll take. Will it be a parachute? A rope? A hammer?"

—Markham Deputy Mayor Frank Scarpitti, discussing amalgamation

"I think some people are acting like lemmings, running right off the cliff."

—Markham Councillor Bill O'Donnell

There's much to be said for Frank Scarpitti's take on the issue of amalgamation.

He, along with many other politicians, has accepted that amalgamation, or restructuring of York Region's municipalities is, in all likelihood, a done deal. Now it's time to determine who will make those decisions and how the finished version will be adapted.

There's also something to be said for O'Donnell's concern that people who are pressing the region's leaders to get going on restructuring may be rushing off for no good reason. He believes — as do many of his political counterparts — there's time to plan.

We don't think five years, the deadline given by former municipal affairs minister Steve Gilchrist to our region's leaders, is long at all, especially when you consider the varied positions that exist in the region.

And there's still much to be discussed

• How will amalgamation affect the quality of life for residents throughout the region?

• How cost effective is it to create one mega-city, as opposed to three medium-sized cities?

• If a resident calls the police for help, or the fire department, who will answer the call?

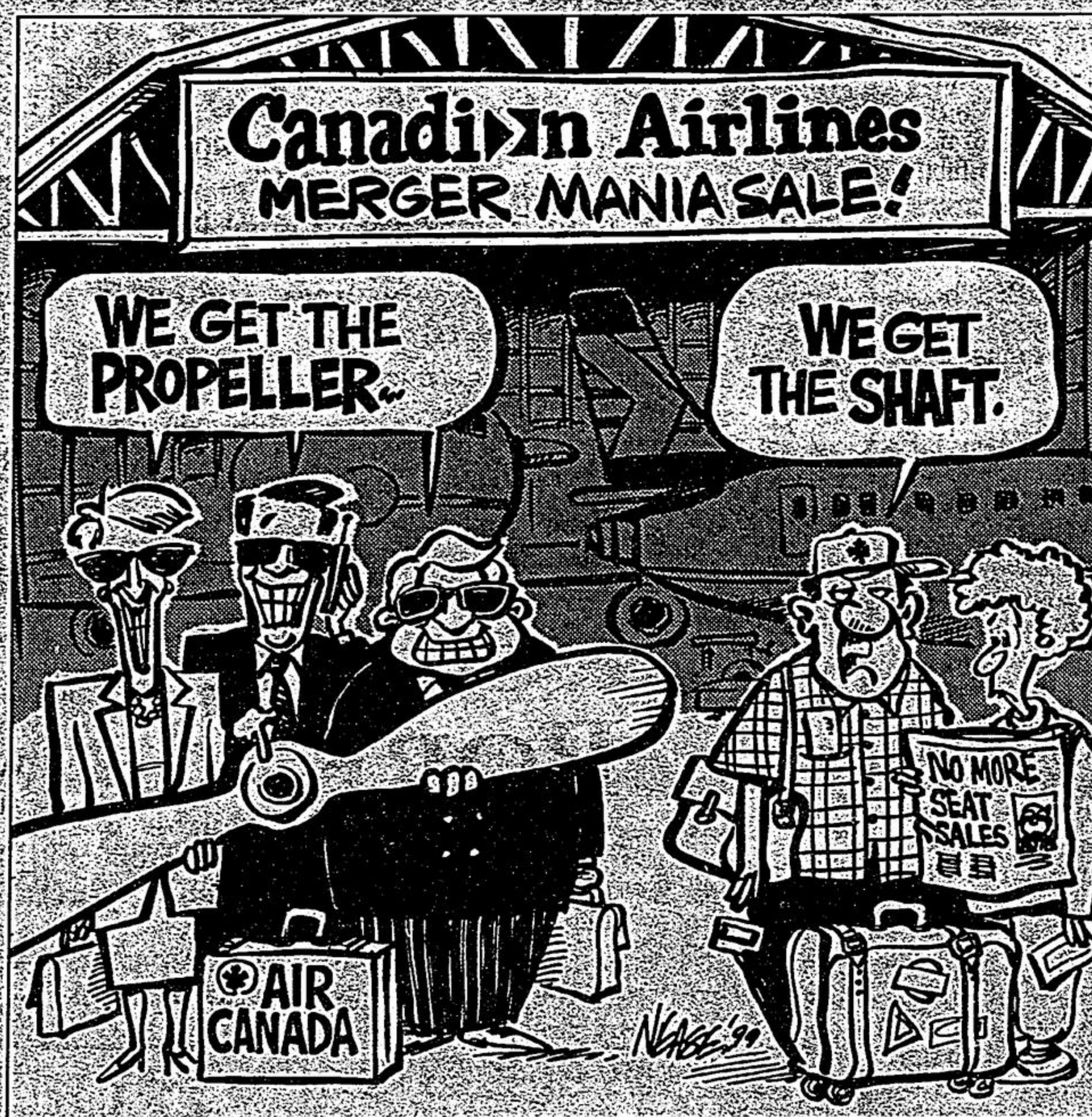
• Will the municipality, whatever it is, still pick up the garbage, clear the streets of snow and offer a swimming program at the recreation centre?

• Will our taxes go up? Or down? Or just stay the same?

So, what must be done? The region must move ahead with financial impact studies, find out how much amalgamation will cost, or save, residents. Municipalities can move ahead to examining quality of life issues and holding public meetings. All municipalities should be considering adding an amalgamation question to the election ballot in November 2000.

Amalgamation is coming. We believe York Region's municipalities should have a parachute.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blame for son's shooting does not rest with police

I do not feel Shaheen Kamadia should lay all of the blame on the York Regional Police for the death of her son, Faraz Suleman.

I believe that her actions and her public outcry of police racism, labelling them as killers, were due to her possible feelings of guilt — that she was partially responsible as she was the one who organized the sting that was supposed to arrest her son. She probably feels that, if she had not been the one to suggest the arrest, perhaps her son may not have been killed that night.

It is really strange that she expected the arrest to be executed successfully, especially when she had already lost some sense of control over her son. What made her think that it would be easy?

What else could the police officer have done after he was struck by the stolen Jeep?

I understand her grief due to the loss of a son, but it is clear that she should not lay all of the blame on the police. It's like starting a fire and blaming the fire department for not stopping it quickly enough to save the house.

It appears clear to me that she is trying to use the police force as a scapegoat, and I believe her actions are unacceptable.

JASON SUEN
THORNHILL

Heading for hospice story was insensitive

Re: Your Nov. 13 article about the Evergreen Hospice.

My husband, at the age of 52, is a client of the hospice. On the day your reporter attended the program, my husband was too ill to attend but looked forward to reading the article.

We were shocked when we received the newspaper on Saturday and found the article. The heading you chose for the front page index box, *Evergreen Hospice support group helps clients facing death*, was one of the most insensitive pieces of journalism I have seen in a long time. It so shocked my husband to see this in print that it has significantly affected his emotional health.

The hospice and the volunteers have come to mean a great deal to us in facing this traumatic experience. It is a happy place for my husband to go and I cannot express the gratitude we feel towards these wonderful people who have supported us through good times and bad.

We did not need such a blatant reminder of our circumstances — the heading could have easily expressed the positive and much appreciated service the hospice offers.

ANNE HUNTER
MARKHAM

LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write Letters to the Editor, 37 Sandiford Dr., Suite 306, Stouffville, Ont. L4A 7X5. Email: letters@stoufftrib.com

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Phone: (905) 640-2100
Fax: (905) 640-5477

Classified: 1-800-743-3353

Distribution: (905) 640-2100

TELEPHONE
(905) 640-2100

FAX: (905) 640-5477

EMAIL: newsroom@stoufftrib.com



Dave Teetzel

Consequences of violence often forgotten

What a dark, bitter irony. On the day a recovering Jonathan Wamback attended a fundraising hockey tournament in Newmarket, another teenage boy was attacked and kicked repeatedly in the head by another gang in another park.

For Dmitri (Matti) Baranovski, there will be no recovery. The 15-year-old died Monday, reportedly killed over a pack of cigarettes by as many as 10 masked youths in North York's G-Ross Lord Park.

Last week, it was a 15-year-old stabbed by a gang of more than 15 people at Don Mills and Finch. In Thornhill, a 19-year-old was charged with robbing and threatening kids at Thornhill Secondary School and a robbery at Thornlea led to another fight.

If all the media coverage surrounding the brutal attack on Jonathan Wamback in a Newmarket park last June did nothing else, you would hope it would teach everyone that violence has serious consequences.

Despite what you may have seen in movies or on TV, a person who is beaten and kicked repeatedly doesn't always just get up and fight back.

Sometimes there is permanent brain injury, sometimes the victim dies.

In my position, I hear all the horror stories, but I also talk to a lot of teenagers who are intelligent, well-mannered and call me about fundraising events they have organized for worthy causes. And the man accused of a road rage beating at a busy Richmond Hill intersection is 66 years old.

It's not about age. The Wamback family and their friends are campaigning to change the Young Offenders Act.

There's no question that legislation is seriously flawed, at least in its initial form, and I'm all for any changes that will rehabilitate offenders or at least get them off the streets. But I don't believe tougher laws will deter these punks.

If legal consequences were an effective deterrent, then those American states that have the death penalty should have the lowest violent crime rates in the world. They don't.

It's common to put the blame for teenage violence on movies, television, video games or rap music. All of these have been known to glorify violence.

But once the media watchdogs have sanitized every movie, TV show, game, CD and novel, they'll have to deal with the fact that kids will still see plenty of violence on the 6 o'clock news.

Obviously, parents have a huge responsibility, but the reality is all of us have to be on the lookout for trouble.

This problem is too large and too complicated to lend itself to easy answers and cookie-cutter solutions.

But concern from all community members is a good first step.