

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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OPINION

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Tracy Kibble

Cool smokers are now the out-to-lunch bunch

It's easy to quit smoking. I should know, I'm an expert. I've been successful at least five times since I joined the 'cool crowd' at the know-it-all age of 14.

That was 23 years ago — a total of about 60,000 cigarettes and \$9,500 later, I'm a light smoker, lucky for me.

When I think about how exciting and grown-up it was to sneak out and smoke as a teen, I worry that the lure for kids today is likely just as strong.

Puffing on a cigarette got you looks of approval from the 'in-crowd' — a necessary first step in walking away from those boring, stigmatic goodie two shoes.

Except the 'in-crowd' then, is in many cases, the out-to-lunch bunch today.

Looking back, it was the so-called geeks of yesteryear that are the high income earners, the alluring and the strong, the powerful leaders of today.

Most of the geeks spent lunch hours in the library, on the sports field or reading in the school hallways. They weren't cool like us, standing outside in the smoking area, puffing one cigarette after another, blowing rings into the air, and watching the billowing blue smoke stream out of our noses.

But I digress.

Little did I know then that tobacco giants were counting on innocent kids like me to take that lurid first step. That first puff. That first purchase. And it's still the starters today that keep the crops growing and the cash flowing.

Now there is proof, after years of vehemently denying such claims, that tobacco giants prey on young smokers. (Ya think?)

They know if a child starts at a young age, he is more likely to continue the filthy habit for his whole, unhealthy life.

And behind the scenes — puffing his usual hot air — is federal Health Minister Allan Rock, talking about suing Canadian tobacco companies for intentionally luring young children into a powerful, deadly addiction.

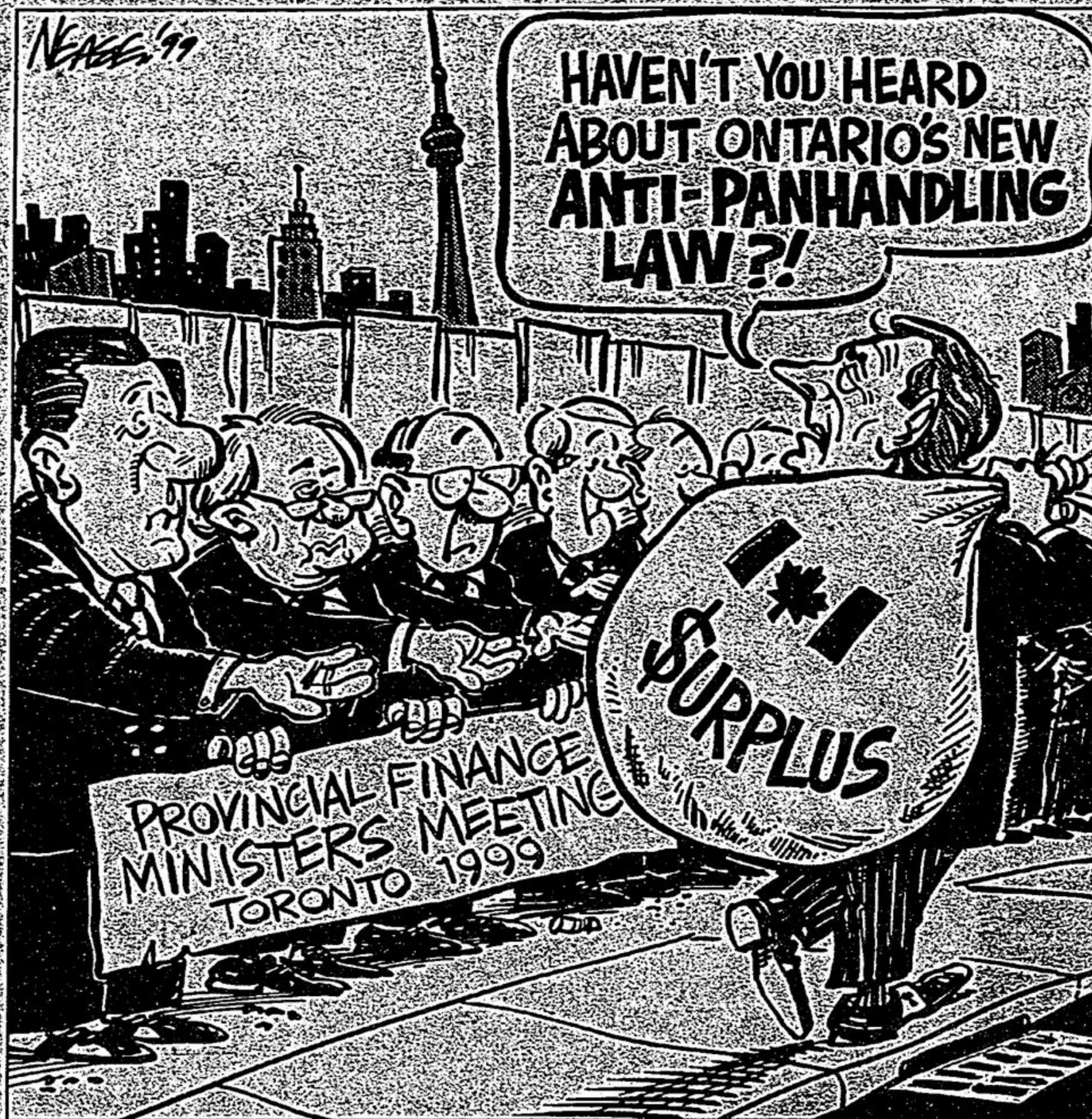
If the government really cared about its young people and our country's future health-care costs, it would enforce an all-out ban on tobacco sales in every store across the country.

It would allow cigarettes to be sold only in liquor and beer stores, with tough age restrictions.

Unfortunately, young people will continue to light up and take that alluring step in the wrong direction.

But we should be making it as difficult as possible to help them make the turn.

In the meantime, tobacco companies and governments will continue to rake in a king-sized ransom as long as our kids continue to light up.



LETTERS

Markham intolerant to Christian evangelists, reader claims

Recent personal experience has affirmed to me that the Town of Markham, the public steward of our municipality, is intolerant toward Christian evangelism on town property but will tolerate offensive public profanity and other objectionable behaviour at Centennial Arena.

This perversion of public policy by our municipal government ought to be outrageous to any fellow citizens who value social decency and human rights as Canadians.

Each Friday evening, I and a few other Christians have been handing out free evangelical literature to people entering Centennial Arena for the Markham Waxers junior hockey games.

Many people have taken the literature while others, as they are free to do, have declined. The literature contains thought-provoking messages about the subject of life after death, offering direction how to be certain of an eternity in heaven instead of hell. After the games, short messages were preached to people as they left the arena. In response, many young people and some adults asked questions or commented about what they read or heard, wanting to talk further.

What is so disturbing about this is that the Town of Markham prohibits our actions on public property even though people have the freedom to refuse the literature if they wish. Under no circumstances was anyone harassed nor was anyone obstructed from entering the arena, yet we were requested to stop by arena employees because of some complaints.

Yet these same employees will permit disgusting and profane language yelled by some fans at the referees, visiting players, their coaches or trainers, even at other fans, with total disregard for children present. How can they justify such a glaring moral contradiction?

In addition, the town's policy is, I submit, a flagrant denial of the right of freedom of religion and freedom of speech on public property owned by Markham taxpayers, such as myself. These are rights which are enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is, consequently, the legal responsibility of all levels of government in Canada, including the Town of Markham, to uphold these constitutional guarantees for all citizens in a truly

democratic nation.

Although some may not like or agree with the message we espouse, which is their right, that is not justifiable reason to deny either the right of one to freely express their religious beliefs on public property, nor for others to be denied the right to hear them. That is intolerance and hypocrisy.

JOHN R. MERRICK
MARKHAM

Public sector has its own view of pay raises

Teachers' union leader Earl Manners and York District School Board chairperson Bill Crothers were recently quoted as saying "everybody gets pay raises."

The employees at Maple Leaf Foods in Saskatchewan should be so lucky. Those workers were forced to take a substantial cut in their \$25,000 pay cheques to save their jobs and prevent the closing of the plant.

You see, financial help was not forthcoming from the provincial NDP government and taxpayers simply because the plant processed food and not cars or students. The union leaders at this location had to swallow their militant pride and recommend the workers accept the pay cuts, a far cry from demanding wage increases.

This action goes to illustrate that workers in the private and public sectors, inevitably have options open to them.

J. SHAW
MARKHAM

Why can't forensic experts determine angle of fatal shot?

It seems unbelievable and bizarre that three forensic experts are unable to determine the angle and distance from which York Regional Police officer Bob Wiche fired his gun on June 19, 1996, the night Faraz Suleman died.

The following facts in the case have been established:

The type and model of the Jeep Cherokee, the specifications of gun and bullet, the recovery point of the bullet casing, the left driver's window, which was shattered by the gunshot and which was partially reconstructed, the point of entry of the bullet into Suleman's neck.

The pathologist commented that with all this information it should be just a matter of geometry to determine the angle and distance of fire.

This piece of data is crucial to the inquest now taking place into Suleman's death because it would determine whether Wiche was out of danger when the shot was fired.

The coroner's jury would, therefore, be in a better position to determine the cause of Suleman's tragic death and make appropriate recommendations to prevent a repeat of another.

Surely in our high-tech computer-driven society, the answer should be easy.

Or is there a deliberate willingness to leave the issue clouded and the matter unresolved?

DENNIS DOYLE
MARKHAM

LETTERS POLICY

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Stouffville Tribune

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Canadian Circulations Audit Board Member



Ontario Press Council

Stouffville Tribune, published every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd. group of newspapers, which includes the Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Aliston Herald/Cotner, Barrie Advance, Barry's Bay This Week, Bolton Enterprise, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Shopping News, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, East York Mirror/Enl/Advocate/Country Routes, Etobicoke Guardian, Flamborough Post, Georgetown Independent/Action Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Midland/Penangishene Mirror, Milton Canadian Champion, Milton Shopping News, Mississauga News, Newmarket Aurora, Georgian Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Oakville Shopping News, Orillia Today, Oshawa/Whitby/Clarington/Port Perry This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Stouffville Tribune, Today's Seniors, Uxbridge Tribune and City of York Guardian.

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