

Stouffville Tribune

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OPINION

TELEPHONE

(905) 294-2200

FAX: (905) 294-1538

EMAIL: newsroom@econsun.com



Brenda Larson

After-school activities add important dimension to school

My sister, the elementary school teacher, once coached a basketball team. As a polio-affected, five-foot-nothing (on a good day) non-athletic academic, my sister certainly will never set the basketball world on fire.

What she does have, in spades, is great rapport with kids, a lively sense of fun and an understanding of how play builds character — all factors she can use to build self-esteem in young people.

And that's what she figured her players were supposed to get out of the extra-curricular program she coached — an idea of the importance of team building, an understanding that some players in life will just naturally be better or faster or stronger than you (but that doesn't mean you can't make a difference to the big picture).

So she had fun, they had fun. They didn't win any big games, but my sister enjoyed the experience and so did the children.

And that's what extra-curricular activities are all about. They make a valuable contribution, not just to the student's personal development but also to the spirit of the school. A broad-ranging program of extra-curricular activities allows students, who may not otherwise shine, step into the spotlight. We all remember perfect examples from our own school years — the shy bookworm who took a delighted bow when he won the regional chess tournament, the tiny sprite of a girl who almost slipped through unnoticed until a gymnastics coach encouraged her to tumble across the mats, the school tough who found fame on the wrestling team. The experiences they gain are not to be measured lightly.

That's why students grieve when they lose extra-curricular activities, the ones teachers unions say their members don't have time to lead due to heavier workloads imposed by the province.

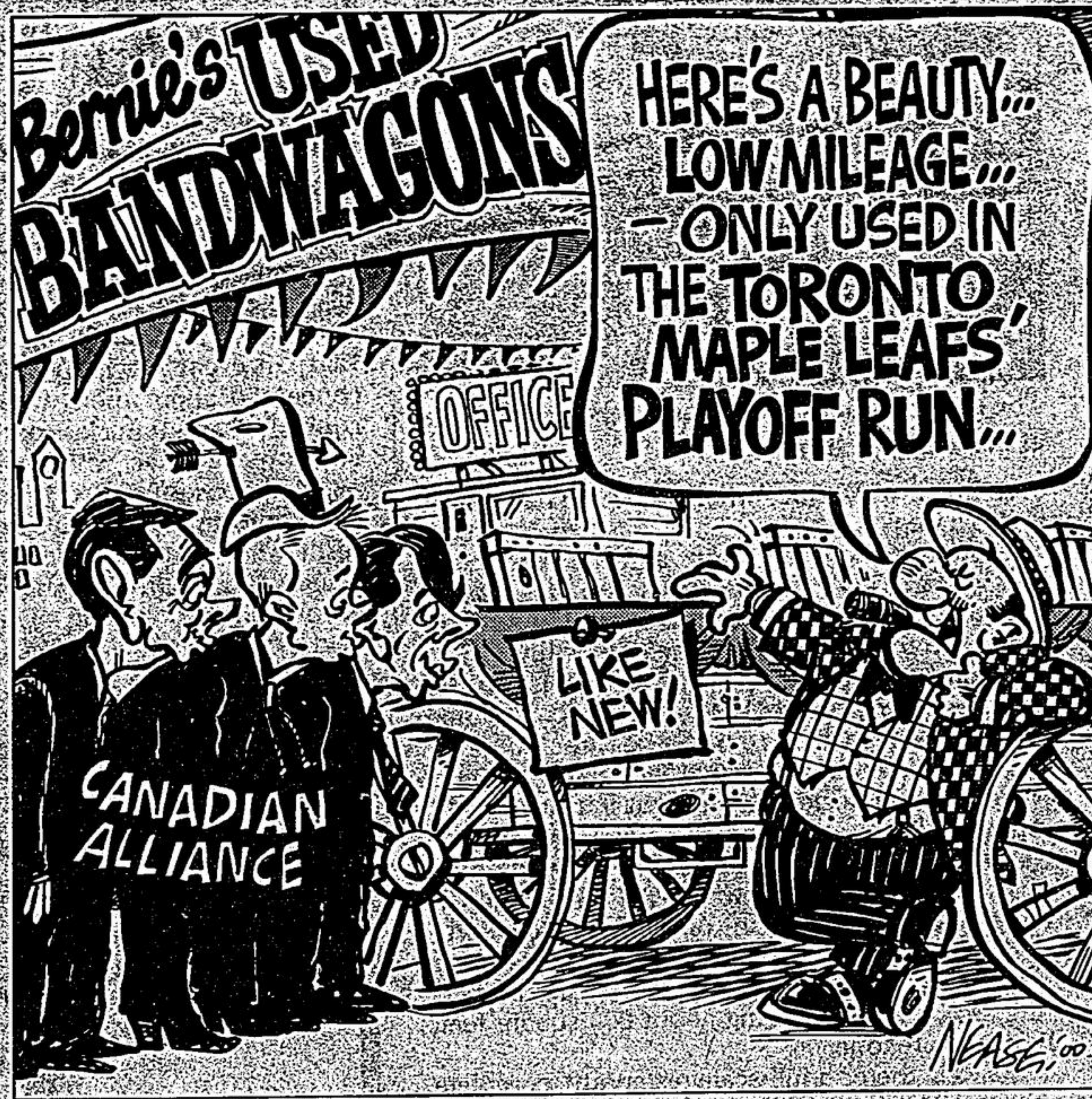
The province's idea, however, to make participation in extra-curricular activities mandatory isn't an appropriate solution for a number of reasons.

First of all, it's unlikely a teacher forced into conducting an activity will take any joy — and consequently display any enthusiasm — in the activity. What a minefield of negativity for students to navigate!

Second, such directives serve only to heighten already tense relationships between teachers and government — not the best environment in which to learn and grow.

And finally, it's simply not right. If the province agrees extra-curricular activities are a vital part of a student's academic life, then such service should be recognized. Perhaps the activities could be included in teachers' instruction time.

They're either vital or they're not. The province must decide.



LETTERS

Incorrect information adds to families' grief over crash deaths

On Saturday, April 8, a terrible accident claimed the life of Mel Innes and Maureen Pilkey, a friend of the Innes.

On May 1, Mel's lovely wife, Bev, passed away as a result of the same accident.

Because of an incorrect press release issued by the police, the Economist & Sun/Tribune reported that Mel had lost control of his car. This is not correct.

I pointed this out and staff writer Kathleen Griffin subsequently wrote a very nice article about Mel and Maureen, and all those same good comments can be said about Bev, as well.

Their immediate family, their church family, their neighbours and friends will miss them terribly. There are a lot of heavy hearts in town.

However, when the second article was printed, a lot of it had been cut out, including references to who lost control of their vehicle.

According to an April 11 police press release, "Mr. Innes was northbound on Brock Road when he was struck by an out-of-control 1999 GMC pick-up truck. Weather conditions have been to blame for this accident."

While a correction will not bring Mel, Bev and Maureen back to us, it is not fair a man has to go to his grave with thousands of people thinking that he was not driving properly.

DENNIS SEELEY
UNIONVILLE

Proud Canadian shows patriotism at every possible occasion

So much has been said and written in your letters to the editor page about the Molson Canadian ad, 'The Rant'. On this subject, I want to express my views on how I, an ordinary proud Canadian of East Indian origin, show my patriotism to this great nation.

Patriotism is an inner feeling that must come from your heart without any materialistic attachment. It should not be a one-time thing. When opportunity and occasion comes, you must express it with pride.

When I send gift items and greeting cards to my relatives and friends abroad, I choose items printed with either a Canadian flag, the maple leaf or the word Canada.

When my older daughter got married June 30, 1996, in my speech at the wedding reception, I not only wished for a long-lasting union of the bride and groom, but for Canada, too, as

the following day was July 1, Canada Day.

In my house and in my car, I display the Canadian flag to show my patriotism.

I am not anti-American, but whenever we visit the U.S., we talk about good things of Canada to our friends and relatives.

SURESH PATEL
MARKHAM

Donating Tory refund won't go far to help growing homeless sector

Re: *If you don't want your \$200, you can always give it away*, Column, May 6.

Tracy Kibble calls those who take issue with the Tory's recent tax rebate "leftists and socialists", then, presuming to speak of behalf of millions of others, says: "The rest of us, however, need our money and will gladly accept it."

This assertion belies the facts and shows Kibble's deep misunderstanding of Canadian values. In poll after poll, Canadians consistently and overwhelmingly rank adequate health and education funding as the top two priorities.

Kibble urges those with a social conscience to donate their windfall to a local school or hospital, and this is laudable, especially in an affluent area like Markham/Unionville.

But what about communities where most people won't be getting a \$200 rebate? Should families there have access to only second- or third-tier health and education services?

While I'm in no position to say what Kibble needs, looking at the Economist and Sun/Tribune real estate insert, where most houses are priced beyond \$300,000, I can only assume the needs of many of us in this community are significantly different from the needs of increasing numbers of homeless people, or those working poor who seek affordable

housing — Ontarians for whom the recent Tory budget offers nothing.

Despite the calls from special interest sectors for a leaner, meaner and more Americanized value system, most of us, according to polls, still recognize that maintaining a civil, just and healthy society depends on more than the charitable whim of the affluent.

It requires a collective commitment and responsibility that benefits us all.

H. LEZNOFF
MARKHAM

Young people know what they're doing when they break the law

I have a six-year-old daughter who knows it is wrong to steal. I have an 11-year-old son who knows it is wrong to kick someone in the head.

Am I to assume that when these children come into their teens they will become stupid and pathetic and forget these rules? Because this is what the Young Offenders Act suggests.

It suggests that teens know not what they do because they simply don't understand consequences for their actions and therefore need shorter sentences and lighter punishments.

The bottom line is that teenagers know exactly the difference between right and wrong. They are not stupid and pathetic; they are, in fact, quite crafty. They know they can beat another human being and there will be little consequences to face.

I say change the consequences first and foremost and we won't need as many probation officers or drop-in centres to keep teens out of trouble.

JOANNE KERR-TAYLOR
BRADFORD

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
9 Heritage Rd.
Markham, ON, L3P 1M3
Email: letters@econsun.com

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Fax: (905) 294-1538

Classified:

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Distribution:

(905) 294-8244