

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Region's abysmal efforts at enforcing water ban must change

Are your neighbours surreptitiously watering their lawns in the middle of the night? Or are they doing these chores in broad daylight with nary a care for announced watering restrictions in York Region?

A good excuse at this point is a confusing array of instructions, recommendations and information about water use.

In Newmarket, for instance, the town is advising residents not to water lawns or wash cars or use this precious resource, provided by a system of aquifers, in wasteful ways.

But an evening stroll through the neighbourhood will likely provide evidence more than a few homeowners are unaware — or uncaring — of the sprinkler ban.

In Vaughan, where water from Lake Ontario supplies residents there and in Toronto, homeowners aren't buying into the restrictions when their Metro neighbours are watering at will.

So what's really going on?

York Region estimates we have about 70 to 75 per cent capacity in our water reserves. There's cause for concern if capacity drops below 70 per cent.

A regional spokesperson says it appears residents are complying with the polite no-watering request. That's good news because if there's an emergency, such as a massive fire, we rely on those reserves.

If the ban was ignored, would we run out of water? According to the region, no.

But would we be in trouble if faced with an emergency? According to the region, yes.

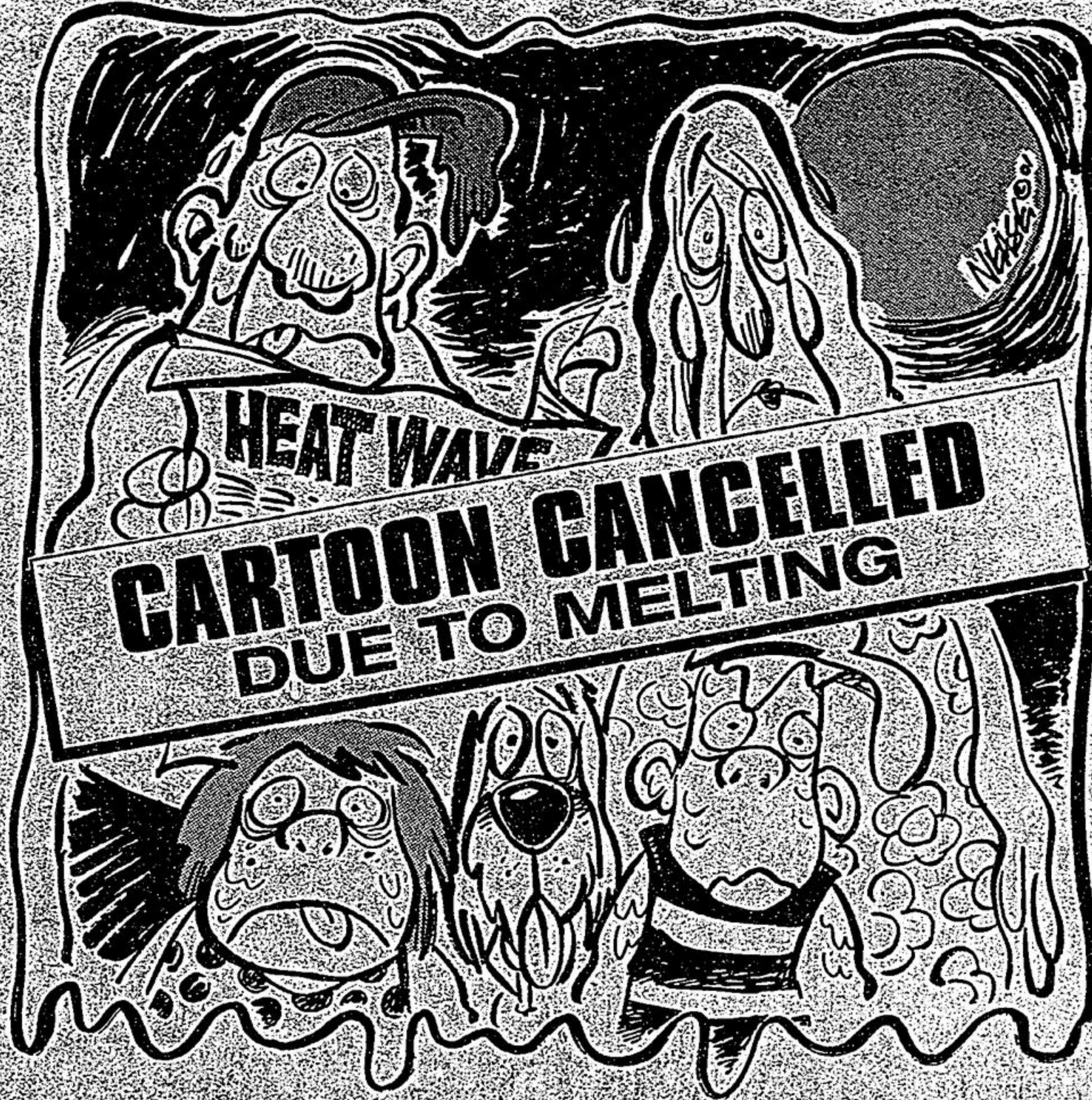
If that's the case, the region has done an abysmal job of educating us about that concern and a worse job of publicizing, implementing, and enforcing a ban across six of York's nine municipalities.

Supplement the standard news release with sweeping notifications to all residents. Use all avenues possible to get the message out.

Have the municipalities fire prevention officers step up education by holding public meetings. And enforce the bylaw stringently.

If we're in a crisis or are approaching a crisis that could be averted with information and education, then regional government should get serious about clearing up the confusion about water use.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

House boom means more traffic, loss of valuable farmland

While a housing boom may bring jobs and people to York Region, we should not be too happy.

We must also consider what more people in the area means. Good farm land will be lost to houses. Hundreds of trees will be cut down. Traffic on all the roads will increase as will pollution, as more time will be spent getting to and from places around the region.

More people and more houses do mean more tax money, but the problems created will require money to solve them. In the long run, I wonder if a housing boom will really benefit the region?

DANNY WENG
MARKHAM

Tables have finally turned in favour of non-smokers

Re *Region's smoking ban removes freedom of choice; letter to the editor; July 31*

Taylor Rodgers is under the impression that the government has banned smoking in restaurants because it cares about the health of smokers.

Mr. Rodgers needs to realize that I, and perhaps others, really don't care if smokers ruin their own health.

However, second-hand smoke is

extremely detrimental to the health of non-smokers.

Therefore, the government is more likely trying to protect non-smokers. I agree with Mr. Rodgers that if he wants to smoke it is his business.

However, it also becomes the business of those around him since his habit is affecting their health.

So there are laws that now ensure he can only harm himself.

Mr. Rodgers' final argument was ridiculous. He stated, "If non-smokers don't like the smoke, go somewhere else."

It was like that for years. We did have to go somewhere else. Now it's our turn to say, "you go somewhere else."

SHERINE EL-SHAMI
MARKHAM

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Your opinion is important to us on our letters to the editor pages and on our website.

We invite you to join the ongoing discussions at yorkregion.com and you're welcome to launch your own discussion there, too.

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Dave Teetzel

Should we tamper with our national anthem?

When I stand up at a baseball game, I just want to know what to sing.

You want me to sing "all thy sons command", I'll do it. You want me to sing "all of us command", I'll do it. "All our lives command" — sure, whatever. You want me to just mouth the words because my singing is really quite awful — well, sorry, I like singing the national anthem.

As you are, no doubt, aware, a group called the Famous 5 Foundation is lobbying to change the lyrics to O Canada because the line "in all thy sons command" doesn't count women in. Liberal Senator Vivienne Poy plans to introduce a motion this fall requesting the change.

This is where, as a columnist, I should go into a flying anti-political correctness rant. But I would feel like a hypocrite doing that in this instance, since this newspaper resolutely refers to Bill Fisch as a chairperson, fishermen as anglers or fishers and employs various other linguistic caelesthenics to let women know they, too, could run York Region or gut fish if they want.

In a way, it's appropriate to our national character that we change our national anthem on a regular basis to avoid hurting people's feelings.

As a matter of fact, should our sons really be "commanding"?

Wouldn't a more Canadian lyric be "true patriot love as a clear majority of us politely request, if it's not too much trouble"?

Forgive me if I have a hard time taking this issue seriously.

As far as the Famous 5 Foundation is concerned, this is hardly the most serious issue affecting women. If we could do away with violence against women or workplace discrimination by changing the words to O Canada, I'm all for it.

But I doubt it will happen. For those who bluster about changing our traditions, give me a break. O Canada has been the official anthem for a little more than 20 years.

What's more, changing the lyrics is a national tradition. The original French lyrics to Calixa Lavalee's song bear no resemblance to Robert Weir's 1908 English lyrics.

When O Canada officially became the national anthem, the lyrics were changed to reduce repetition and "God keep our land glorious and free" was added.

Maybe we should just drop O Canada altogether. Adopt something more contemporary like some Celine Dion-David Foster blanchange.

One glorious anthem is guaranteed to get any true Canadian on his or her feet and singing. Let's rise and sing.

"Oh, the good ol' hockey game is the best game you can name and the best game you can name is..."

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, Ont., L3P 1M3

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