

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
34 Civic Ave., Stouffville, ON L4A 7Z5

PUBLISHER **Ian Proudfoot**

## EDITORIAL

## Junior hockey teams could use support

Are York Region residents hockey fans or NHL fans? There is a difference.

The Provincial Junior A Hockey League season opens tonight on four fronts. The league, a branch of the Ontario Hockey Association, has six teams in York Region.

The Markham Waxers, Thornhill Rattlers and Vaughan Vipers play in the South Conference while the Aurora Tigers, Newmarket Hurricanes and Stouffville Spirit are in the North Conference.

It's good hockey, one level below the Barrie Colts, Ottawa 67's and other teams in the major junior Ontario Hockey League. It's the best hockey played in York Region. The players, often homegrown kids, are aspiring to play in the OHL or for U.S. or Canadian college or university teams.

But does anyone care?

Many league games are played in front of fewer than 200 people. On their drive to the North Conference title last year, the Aurora Tigers played in front of sections of empty seats during some playoff games. Only when the Tigers met arch-rival Newmarket, did the Aurora Community Centre fill up.

Why the apathy? Canadian sports fans only seem interested in big-time pro sports these days. They'll spend more than \$100 for a ticket to see the Leafs and drive through a snowstorm to get to the Air Canada Centre to watch it.

But they won't drive around the corner in their own community to spend \$8 to see the hometown team play.

Like it or not, we are now living in suburbia or right next door to it. Many of our towns have become large and anonymous. Some residents think of themselves as Toronto residents. Pride in their local community isn't what it was.

The league and many of its member teams must take some of the blame. It's not good enough to put a team on the ice and expect fans to pack your building.

With such a high concentration of teams in this area, the league should market its product. Advertise and promote.

The large number of teams is part of the problem. It's no longer special to have a junior A hockey franchise in your community. There are 10 Provincial league teams within a 45-minute drive of Richmond Hill, where officials have said they want another club located.

The talent level may be diluted, thanks to the high number of teams, but it's still good quality hockey. Many teams have put a push on to develop and play local talent, instead of importing players. That means you'll likely be watching your neighbours when you go to a game.

The Stouffville Spirit hosts the Collingwood Blues tonight at 7:30 in one of four season-opening games in the Provincial Junior A Hockey League.

On Friday night, Markham is home to Toronto St. Michael's. On Saturday, Ajax plays at Thornhill. Why not consider going?

# OPINION

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Many ways to conceive children

*Re: Homosexual partners can't become parents without cheating, letter to the editor by G.H. Collett, Sept. 7.*

When we were married — 43 years ago next week in an Anglican Church with an Anglican minister — the vows did not, as I remember, mention children.

We were to love honour and obey, in sickness and in health, for better and worse, etc. G.H. Collett, should be dragged into the 21st century. There are such things as adoption, in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination. There is no need for gay couples to cheat on each other.

Apart from that, we are familiar with several gay couples and would rather see them raising children than, say, that conventionally married couple, the Bernardos.

The only reality in marriage is love either between a couple of whatever sex or among parents and children, whoever they may be.

DIANE & BILL DODDS  
MARKHAM

### Teachers tired because of criticism

*Re: What could possibly be tiring out York public board teachers?, letter by J. Shaw, Sept. 7.*

Teachers are tired because of individuals such as J. Shaw who undermine their relationship with students and their communities through public degradation of their profession.

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

Write: Letters to the Editor, 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3, e-mail letters@econsun.com

How do we expect our children to show our teachers the respect they deserve if we, as adults, do not?

I have three school-age children and have recently become an uncertified supply teacher. It has been an eye-opening experience. J. Shaw should spend a day in the classroom attending to the needs of 30-plus students, including those with behavioural and emotional issues.

Make sure you extend your day for lesson preparation, meetings, report cards, communicating with parents, interviews, tutoring and extra-curricular activities.

Oh and don't forget your weekends which are spent marking, doing lesson plans, supervising occasional trips and record keeping. Teachers put in a full year's work and then some during the school year, without complaint.

As for the comment regarding the 12 weeks they have off in the summer — which is actually only eight — many participate in professional development courses, teach summer school and coach sports.

SHARON SMYTH  
STOUFFVILLE



Debra Kelly

## Labour woes spoil idyllic picture of return to school

Whose heart was not warmed by the sight of their bright-eyed and bubbly children merrily making their way back to school last week?

But, alas, did you cross your fingers behind your back as you watched their knapsacked backs bob off?

What parent did not hope for a school year free of nasty labour woes? A year bereft of contentious wrangling between teachers and government?

By all accounts, Premier Ernie Eves' Tories are trying a different tactic. While former premier Mike Harris was always up for a swipe at "union bosses", Mr. Eves favours less dismissive terms.

Optimistic parents can be cheered by this climate, while the cynics in the crowd can hold their breath.

The Eves Tories are standing hard on changes made on Mr. Harris' watch, such as allowing workers to cross picket lines if they choose, permitting a 60-hour work week and placing restrictions on union organizing drives.

In that vein, unions are still pledging to bring down this government. Teachers unions remain wary.

Despite the province's move to review the funding formula the battle with school boards in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton shows it isn't afraid to get into the driver's seat.

While the Tories say the ouster of balanced-budget-challenged trustees is a move to bring stability to classrooms, it gave many parents a pronounced feeling of uneasiness.

Mr. Eves' More Common Sense Revolution just could see chaos erupt in our schools with nearly every teachers union without a contract.

Contracts for both public board secondary and elementary teachers in York have expired. (The deal for Catholic board teachers runs to 2003.)

Negotiations this fall will be light on substance with the funding formula — and its dangling carrot of a funding boost — not expected until November.

Mr. Eves has dropped hints grants may be in the offing to help boards boost salaries — though that was before Ottawa announced it would force Ontario to make good on a \$1.33-billion overpayment in tax revenues.

Parents can voice their opinions on education funding by visiting the Education Equality Task Force website ([www.edfundingreview.on.ca](http://www.edfundingreview.on.ca)).

Wendy van Straten, the head of the York Region chapter of the Elementary Teachers' Federation, perhaps has the best advice: "You just put on your Pollyanna hat and hope for the best ... but prepare for the worst."

And keep those fingers crossed.

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