

Economist &amp; Sun/Sun-Tribune

# DIVERSIONS

## WHOOSH!

*It's all downhill for York Region's enthusiastic tobogganing fans*

BY PATRICK MANGION  
Staff Writer

While conditions have been less than ideal around the GTA, a lack of snow hasn't stopped toboggan-toting revellers from enjoying one of the oldest winter traditions.

And that includes in York Region, which may be a lot of things but a tobogganing haven probably isn't one of them.

Still, while the ride may be short-lived and the vertical underwhelming, if you can slide down it, they will come.

With burgeoning growth enveloping the likes of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan, the convergence of highways 407, 7 and Yonge Street might seem among the most unlikely of toboggan hot spots in York.

For Thornhill and Richmond Hill locals, however, Chapman Park, at Hunter's Point Road and Hwy. 7, has long since represented an oasis of winter fun.

Fresh powder mixed with

### HOTSPOTS

Some of York Region's best tobogganing locales:

- Chapman Park — Hunter's Point, Richmond Hill
- Kennedy Reservoir, Milliken
- Dennis Park, Newmarket
- Drew Doak Park, Newmarket
- Boyd Conservation Area, Vaughan
- Memorial Park and Rupert Park, Stouffville
- Lambert Wilson Park — Family Leisure Complex, Aurora
- Mount Pleasant Park, Richmond Hill

comfortable temperatures set the scene last week for ideal tobogganing conditions and the result at Chapman Park and many other hills can often amount to anarchy on ice.

But on this early January day, a handful of skiers and snowboarders peacefully co-exist with tobogganing veterans Mike Dennis, his nine-year-old son David and snow-riding neophytes Ana Grosman and her two-year-old son Eitan.

*'I'd never seen snow before coming to Canada. I saw pictures (of tobogganing), but I didn't really understand it.'*

After leaving her native Argentina and its tepid year-round temperatures six years ago, tobogganing topped Ms Grosman's list of new experiences.

"We lived in Winnipeg first, but it was too flat," she said, keeping a careful eye as husband Gabi and Eitan hurtle down the hill in a plastic sled.

"I'd never seen snow before coming to Canada. I saw pictures (of tobogganing), but I didn't really understand it."

"It's great fun, as long as you don't hurt your back," Ms Grosman, a physiotherapist, added.

Despite meagre snow conditions, Mr. Dennis is reminded of his youth, tobogganing in North York when he was his son's age.

Following their five-second ride, they head back for the top, sled in tow, like clockwork.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Anthony Rustico, 5, goes airborne at Stouffville's Memorial Park. Tobogganing "is great fun, as long as you don't hurt your back," physiotherapist Ana Grosman said.

Young David sports the latest three-ski snow racer with steering wheel and brakes. His father goes with a simple, yet effective plastic saucer.

"If you can't go skiing, this is the next best thing. It's good fun for a few hours. You can't go wrong," Mr. Dennis said.

"It's too bad there's no lift. Maybe we could lobby our councillors," he joked.

In Newmarket, Dennis Park, off Cane Parkway, is a hive of activity under a fleeting winter sun.

Parents and kids dot the wide tobogganing locale, each with their instrument of choice.

Snow racers, inflatables, plastic sleds and wooden toboggans are all well represented.

See DANGER, page 17.



Anne Brodie

On Movies

## Intriguing film noir has many layers to explore

**BAD EDUCATION**

Starring Gael Garcia Bernal, Fele Martinez and Francisco Boira  
Now Playing

Pedro Almodovar is one of the finest movie directors working today. His movies are surprising, personal, colourful and vexing and they tell us much about ourselves.

There are always drag queens, down and out street people, "stars", priests, nuns and mothers. His Spain is probably not one seen much by tourists, but it is unforgettable.

Both Penelope Cruz and Antonio Banderas shot numerous films with Almodovar. For this role, he chose an established star, the Mexican firebrand Gael Garcia Bernal.

I first interviewed Mr. Bernal Sept. 12, 2001. We were both shaken by the previous day's American terrorist attacks, but we had jobs to do. He was promoting *E Tu Mama Tambien* and I was discovering "new talent".

Thanks to that breakout role and the next in *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Mr. Bernal is an international star. He's brainy, too, and not given to the additional baggage of heartthrob status, which he has.

See NEW, page 17.

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