

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Time to keep word on retirement

It may not be the law of the land, but common sense says forcing someone to retire at the arbitrary age of 65 is wrong.

It's discrimination, plain and simple. Quebec knows it; P.E.I. knows it. So does Manitoba, Alberta, the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Ontario's Liberals seem to understand this, too, calling for an end to mandatory retirement in the 2003 throne speech.

From a human rights point of view, forcing a happy, productive employee out of the workforce just because he has turned 65 is nonsense.

But there's another all encompassing reason to allow workers to stay on the job longer. With a rapidly aging population, Canada is running out of skilled workers. In 2003, about 13 per cent were more than 65. By 2023, 20 per cent of Canadians will be past the mandatory retirement age.

Increasingly, the concern is a shrinking workforce.

A report by the Conference Board of Canada says subsidizing Canadian women to have more children, which is extremely expensive if the true cost of raising a child is factored in, and enticing more skilled foreign workers aren't the answers.

A big piece in this complex puzzle is keeping Canadian workers on the job longer. Ontario needs to make good on its promise to ban mandatory retirement, so workers reaching 65 can take advantage now. But outlawing forced retirement is the easy part.

Convincing valuable employees to stick with their careers longer may be more difficult. The average retirement age for a Canadian is 62. And only 6 per cent of workers who are allowed continue to work full time after 65.

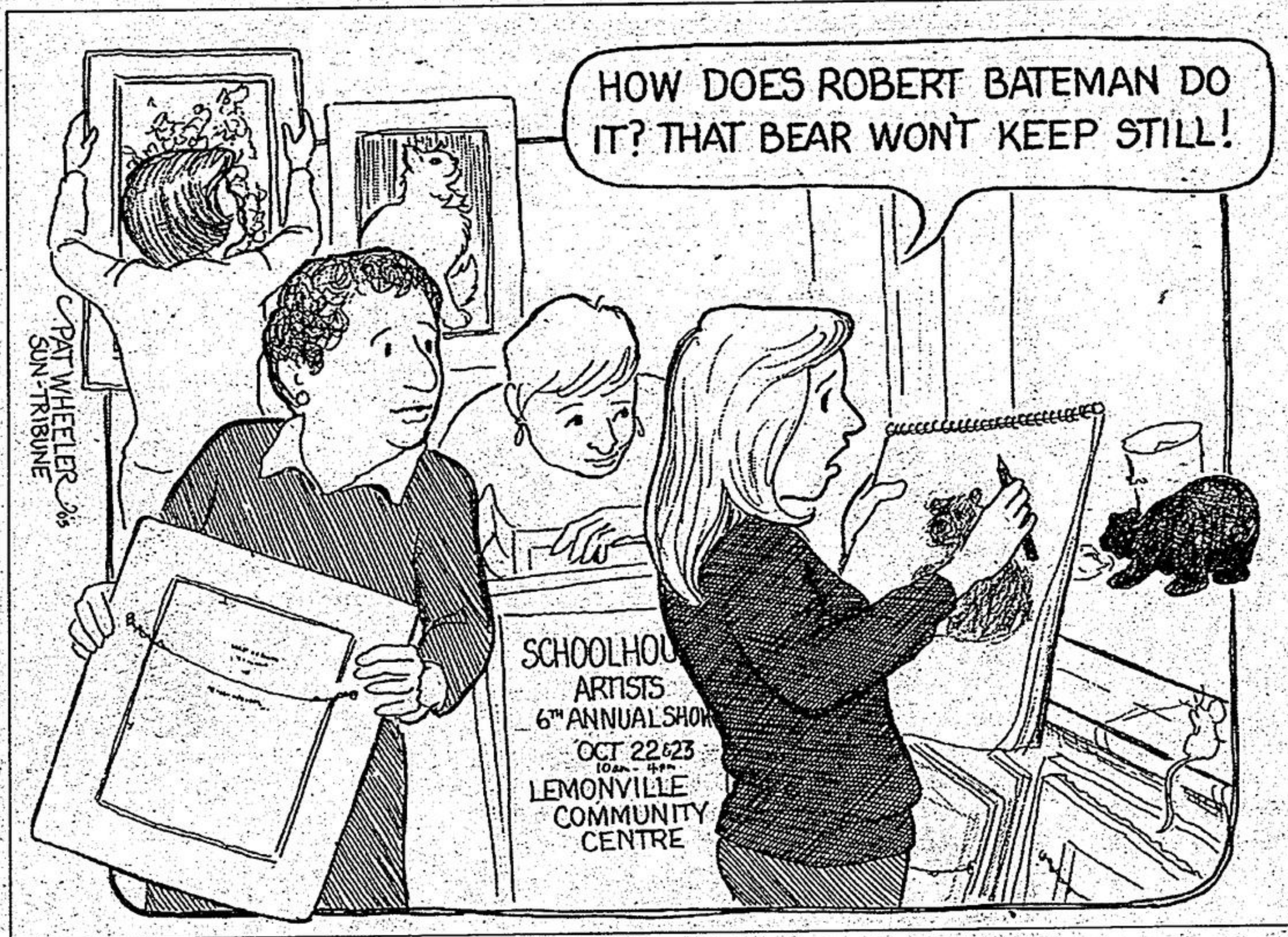
To add meaning to a mandatory retirement ban, governments must provide incentives to keep more older employees in the workforce.

The Conference Board of Canada has some suggestions:

- Create a government pension plan that doesn't penalize people continuing to work past 65;
- Provide better adult education and training to enhance and develop skills as workers age;
- Match older workers with industries facing labour shortages and unable to find enough younger employees.

These are all laudable ways to keep aging workers productive.

But first, the Liberals must stop procrastinating and end age discrimination in Ontario by banning mandatory retirement.



Letters to the Editor

Columnist discriminated based on dress of youths

Re: *Smoker's gauntlet degrades school*, column by Jim Thomas, Oct. 13.

I have never read anything with such strong discriminatory accusations.

Not only did Mr. Thomas discriminate against an entire group of people, to whom it appears he has never even spoken, he has insulted a community that he feels he's representing.

He discriminated against youth based on their appearance, which is probably the lowest form of discrimination there is.

His assumption these individuals are involved with the law I found most interesting. I guess it is safe to say anyone holding a cigarette or wearing a band T-shirt has a record with the police.

Mr. Thomas said: "...there'll always be a cluster of hard-core renegades who feel they're beyond the norm and above the law".

Please, Mr. Thomas, explain to us what is normal.

This article sounds like it should have been written in 1960s. Have we not evolved just a little since then?

I was disgusted to hear in this day and age, there are individuals who still believe it is right to judge on appearance alone.

In a perfect world, according to Mr. Thomas, we would have schools full of androids in matching attire.

In a community expanding with young families, we can only hope Mr. Thomas' utopia is never realized.

THERESA CLIFF
 STOUFFVILLE

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@yrmg.com

Street dusty as Dodge City

Summer on Westlawn Crescent in northwest Stouffville started out like any other summer. It was quiet, clean and friendly.

As summer progressed, the mud, dust and disarray from the ripping up of Westlawn turned the street into something reminiscent of Dodge City during the gold rush.

Since early July, I have watched these conditions unfold and wondered how this has been allowed to continue. Many people have been left bewildered, annoyed and, most unfortunately, ambivalent. A project touted as a 10-week inconvenience appears, unbelievably, to be headed for completion some time in 2006.

Despite all of this, I wonder what would have happened if Westlawn was a major thoroughfare or had more than 10 50-year-old bungalows on it?

I can't wait for the closures on Elm Road and Fairview Avenue and the re-construction of Main Street. If Westlawn is an indication, this project should stretch well into the next decade.

In fact, in all its planning glory, the so-called development of Stouffville will certainly bring a whole new meaning and way of life to the town motto "Country Close to the City".

TIM MATHERS
 STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Random acts of caffeine make community perk

York Region and many of its leaders talk a good game.

After all, we are a community of character and are eventually expected to show off 11 worthy attributes, including integrity, respect and optimism, identified by residents of the region.

All are the kind of things we were supposed to learn in elementary school; the same qualities we won't exhibit after getting cut off in heavy traffic on the 404.

Residents didn't name kindness to the list of 11 but maybe it should fit somewhere between fairness and respect.

As a public service to the region, I performed my own kindness test at the Stouffville Arena last week. A man even older than me held a door and waited several seconds for me to catch up to him.

"Thanks," I said. He nodded and smiled widely and I grabbed the door from him.

Time for the test. Three teenagers with hockey jackets and bags from another town were approaching. I held the door and looked them square in the face. Not one said a thing or looked my way.

One spat on the floor a few feet from me but I didn't take it personally. He couldn't have recognized himself in this column, yet. And to think, they won the game.

Have no fear. The next day, my battered faith in humans was renewed.

A reader called to say thank you, but not to me.

No problem. She was praising the woman in front of her at the Tim Hortons drive-thru who paid for her coffee before vamoosing onto Main Street that morning.

Store staff knew of the kind Stouffvillian and her regular act of picking up the tab for strangers but didn't know her name.

We shared stories. A similar event in the same lineup made my day a few months back. I held out a \$5 bill to cover my order and the clerk brushed me off like I was passing counterfeit cash.

"The guy two cars ahead of you left a \$20 and said to pay for as far as it would go," said the clerk.

Random acts of caffeine. I'm adding cappuccino to my list of desired attributes.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

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