

OPINION

Sun-Tribune
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Students get green message

Conference helps students get behind environment, Feb 16.

In the last year, the childhood veil over my eyes has completely come off and the problem that has hit me the hardest is the damaged environment.

When people say, "It's never been this hot before" or "Why isn't there any snow, there usually is at this time of year?", I am heartbroken knowing this is a reality and humans did this.

Around me I see wasted water, pointless uses of cars and careless destructive acts that could have been prevented.

I believe these presentations raise awareness in a fun, non-aggressive way. Who would you pay attention to more, your nagging parent or a fun public speaker? I know that teenagers, being one myself, would rather laugh or feel welcome than get yelled at.

By having presentations come to the schools with fun and interesting people, the message will reach more people quicker. If their message, which is saving and preserving the environment, is listened to and thought about, students will realize how much they are taking advantage of the non-renewable Earth.

The most important concern is the preservation of our planet. Humanity has been selfish in the past using fossil fuels, hunting and wasting water, but I think we should learn from our mistakes in the past and undo the wrong we did to Earth.

I think sometimes we choose luxury and privileges over well-being and health. I think everybody must make sacrifices, even if it means turning off the tap.

JESSICA CARROLL
MARKHAM

Good news budget for town

I applaud Markham council's 2006 budget as it will continue to provide us with sustainable growth.

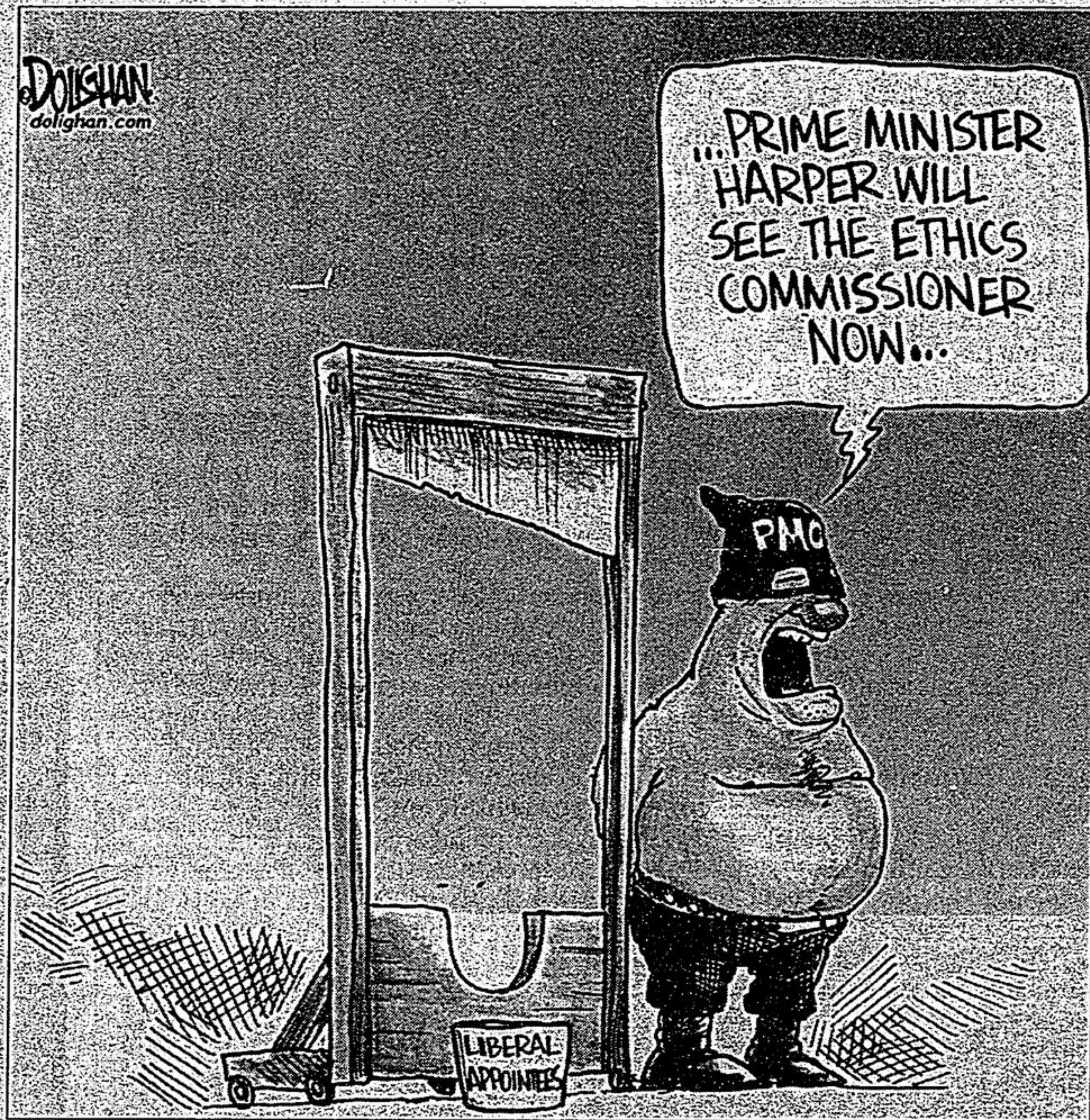
This budget will raise taxes, but at least provide us with more services. It should be stressed the additional money will go toward strengthening our community. I'm also pleased this budget will continue to keep our town fiscally stable for many years to come.

I agree with the additional services this budget has to offer. We will receive more money for maintenance of parks, as well as the building of new ones. It also pays for our much needed expansion at Markham Village Library.

We will also get some money to maintain our roads and to build bicycle routes. I believe that is a good step towards encouraging biking instead of taking our cars around.

As a student, I believe the tax hike is fair, since our taxes are based on property values. All taxes benefit everybody one way or another. For example, this budget will be encouraging children and their parents to play in our parks or visit the library instead of staying home.

GALVIN TAN
MARKHAM



Journal fracas makes everyone look bad

Depending on your point of view, what's been going on at the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) is either a strange squabble between the academic elite and their bosses or a tense drama about freedom of the press and the role science plays in the media.

Sign me up for the latter.

It started last month when two editors of CMAJ, Canada's leading medical journal, were abruptly fired by the publisher.

The journal's editorial board promptly wrote a letter to the publisher requesting they be reinstated.

In the meantime, an acting editor was hired.

He agreed to take the position, but only if the publisher accepted a governance plan that would ensure he and his staff would maintain their editorial freedom.

A week later, he quit. One can only guess why.

It turns out the original editor,

John Hoey, and the publisher, CMA Holdings, have been engaged in an increasingly public battle over editorial independence.

In a Jan. 3 editorial, Dr. Hoey wrote: "While the Dec. 6, 2005, issue was in preparation, the editorial independence of the journal was compromised when a CMA executive objected strenuously to a news article we were preparing on behind-the-counter access to emergency levonorgestrel (Plan B). The objection was made in response to a complaint from the Canadian Pharmacists Association, which had learned about the article when it was interviewed by our reporters. The CMA's objection was conveyed to CMAJ's editors and to our publisher, who subsequently instructed us to withhold the article."

The publisher denies firing Dr. Hoey because of his actions and, instead, wrote in a letter posted on the CMAJ website stating it was merely looking for a "fresh approach."

Others say that the recent resig-



David Suzuki

nation of the acting editor is proof Dr. Hoey was fired for his insistence on editorial freedom.

It gets stranger. In response to the firings, an ad-hoc committee of the editorial board published a commentary piece entitled Editorial autonomy of CMAJ, again on the journal's website.

In it, the committee reviewed the events leading up to Dr. Hoey's firing and concluded: "We view the episodes as raising serious concern about the integrity of the journal, its reputation and its viability in the

community of top medical journals."

This is on the journal's own website.

Talk about dirty laundry.

On one hand, such a public airing of grievances could be said to be beneficial to maintaining public trust in important institutions such as the CMAJ because it lays all the cards on the table.

On the other hand, it could be said to be making matters worse by making internal squabbles public and decreasing public trust in journals, research and science in general.

One can only hope that something good comes out of this mess. It would be naive to think that the CMAJ's tension between management and editorial staff is an isolated incident.

Indeed, with so much research being funded by corporations with a profit motive, and journals relying increasingly on advertising, the issue of editorial independence is becoming more and more pressing.

Editorial freedom in a science journal, as in the media in general, is essential.

With science journals, this freedom must be especially transparent, as editorial interference could have profound repercussions. Based on information from the CMAJ website, the publisher of the journal appears to have crossed the line on more than one occasion.

Let's hope this is sorted out before the CMAJ is relegated to the backwaters of journal rankings. It deserves better.

A warning published on the journal website by the editorial committee says as much, although it is overly optimistic: "In our view, any attempt by the CMA to impose its influence on the editors would be catastrophic for the CMAJ's reputation as well as damaging to the reputation of the CMA."

It's a little late for that.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

LETTERS POLICY

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

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Canadian Circulation Audit Board Member

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Sun-Tribune

A York Region Newspaper Group community newspaper. The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a member of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 70 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Economist & Sun (Markham), The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.