

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lack of fluoride goes against child development

I went to my new dentist in Stouffville this month and was informed by my hygienist the water in Whitchurch-Stouffville is not treated with fluoride.

At the end of my cleaning, she had me rinse with fluoride, something I have never been asked to do in all the years I have gone to dentists.

She told me since she began practising in Stouffville, she had noticed a higher incidence of dental cavities and tooth decay in children here compared to the Toronto practice where she previously worked.

I have asked my councillor Phil Bannon, to look into this and he said he would raise it at town council.

I find it hard to understand why any community would accept this situation, especially because of the detrimental impact this kind of decision has on young children.

KEN MACKAY
BALLANTRAE

Be careful at playground

I would like to caution parents to inspect the playground equipment where their children play.

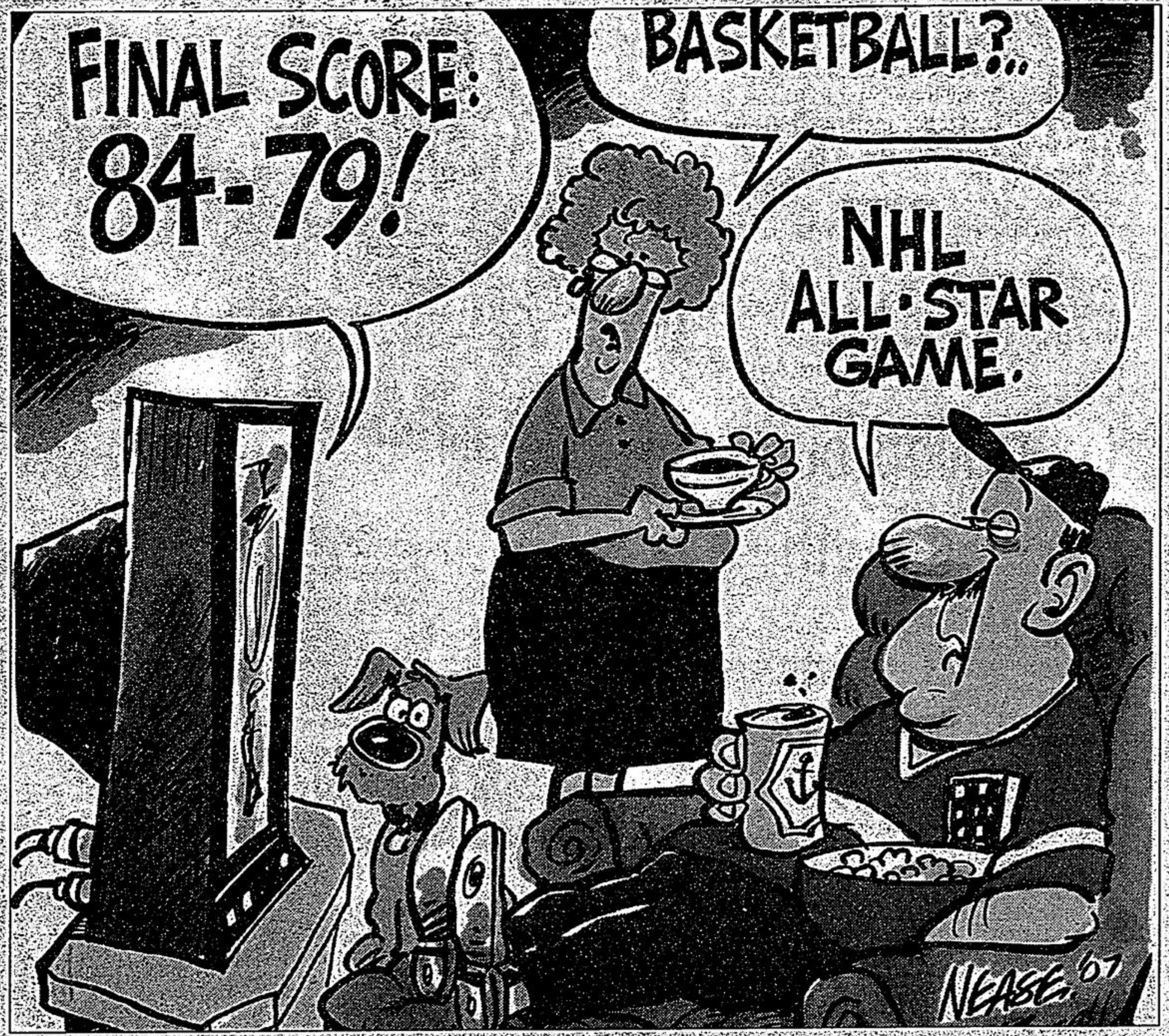
While playing with my children at the Geoffrey Crescent parkette Monday, my four-year old discovered what appeared to be icicles all over the slide, stairs and below the equipment. Upon examination, it was broken glass approximately a half-inch thick in pieces ranging in size of 1 x 1 inch to 4 x 6 and larger.

After picking up approximately 20 pieces, we were forced to leave and report it to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's parks department, as there were several more pieces all over the equipment and underneath it, which were hidden under the snow.

I cannot believe the thoughtlessness of the individual(s) who created this problem. It ruined a very nice day of playing in the snow for my children and others in the neighbourhood.

This could have been a very serious incident, as my son was about to lick the "icicle".

ELIZABETH MACMILLAN
STOUFFVILLE



Canadians aren't afraid of environmental change

Right now, the environment is hot. Literally and figuratively. Much of North America has hardly had a winter this year and the media and politicians have finally caught on to the fact Canadians now cite environmental issues as among their biggest concerns.

You know the environment has become a big deal when Alberta's own Stephen Harper starts talking about it. He's doing it through gritted teeth, certainly, but he knows he has to say something. Polling shows his party is very vulnerable on the issue.

As well it should be, considering his lame efforts to date.

But while the public is pushing Prime Minister Harper forward, some pundits are pushing him back, saying Canadians aren't ready for real change.

They insist any leader who tries to make the changes necessary to curb global warming and put Canada on the path to being an environmental leader will suffer

politically because Canadians don't really want to pay for a cleaner environment, even if they say they do.

Wrong on at least two accounts. First, pollution and poor environmental practices are already costing us dearly in terms of our health and international reputation, as well as in cold, hard cash. We spend billions on the health effects of air pollution alone.

Second, Canadians know real environmental change can only be accomplished if we all take part. That requires domestic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions within a global framework such as Kyoto.

And it requires changes in rules and laws to ensure we all are playing on an even field. This is the role of government — to work with other nations and develop policies domestically, to encourage more sustainable choices and behaviours.

Free market ideologues might now be jumping up and down screaming about how government shouldn't interfere in the market



David Suzuki

Nonsense.

As Canada's great economic thinker John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out, government has a clear role in making the market work toward a common goal.

Canada, as all other industrialized nations, has never had a pure market economy.

Government has always played a role in the expansion and shaping of the Canadian economy, from the building of the railroad to creation of the auto pact.

Industry responds to more than

price signals in the market. Fiscal policy (such as taxes and subsidies) as well as regulations, also guides decision-making in corporate boardrooms.

The free market wonks are right in saying Canadians who really want environmentally sustainable goods and services can already hunt them down and purchase them. But the fact so many of us don't choose more sustainable options is not because we don't care or aren't willing to pay slightly more for them, but because we don't have enough information, can't find the best options or don't know where to look. And when we do find them, because of subsidies or rules favouring the status quo, the most sustainable option can be prohibitively expensive.

Government's role is to advance the public good. On the environment, this means enacting visionary new laws and policies to move us toward a sustainable economy. Certainly, there would be griping, moaning and complaining from

some circles. But the reality is, Canadians are tough and practical.

We know our environmental record stinks and we know global warming is a very serious problem that will harm our health and our economy. We're willing to pull up our bootstraps to make things happen. But we need direction from our leaders to ensure everyone plays by the same rules. It's only fair.

Polls show Canadians are genuinely concerned about our country's flagging environmental record and what that means for our health and our future. They are expecting politicians at all levels to be upfront, pragmatic and committed to working toward a more environmentally sustainable future. Politicians and pundits can squabble amongst each other about the public's appetite for change, but the public is already ahead of them. And this time, lame efforts won't cut it.

Take the Suzuki challenge at davidsuzuki.org

LETTERS POLICY

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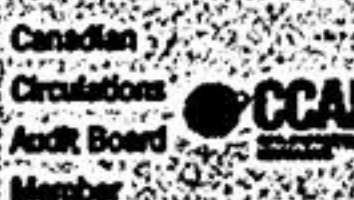
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