

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Disconnect between pot use, laws

It is not surprising a new study says the number and average age of pot smokers in Ontario is rising. Use of the drug once was most prevalent among teens and twenty-somethings. But now the average pot user is 31, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which notes smoking and drinking are in decline.

Those teens who got high in the 1970s, '80s or '90s are now adults with kids of their own, but many are still smoking up. In fact, 14 per cent of adults are smoking pot with some regularity.

You may have attended a party lately and found one or more of the adults quietly wandered off and smoked up, even though there was plenty of legal alcohol available.

The Paul Martin Liberals wanted to decriminalize marijuana possession while cracking down on the growers.

Their idea never became law and they were later defeated.

Nevertheless, many Canadians took more boldly than ever, thinking they can puff with impunity when they are really at the mercy of the police if caught.

Meanwhile, police regularly bust grow-ops, which can be a fire hazard and, as a criminal enterprise often in the centre of residential neighbourhoods, a public safety risk.

Clearly there is a disconnect between people's personal behaviour and its consequences out there in our community.

It is just the Me Generation now a little older, who will not forgo that particular kind of high they can only get from marijuana and will let others break the law to supply them? Is it the fact that it's illegal that adds to the thrill?

Some day we will have to own up to this problem.

Either we will have to accept that marijuana use is so deeply ingrained in our society that it is unfair and unwise to be throwing people in jail and fostering an underworld of crime to feed our demand.

It is a drug that is probably no more harmful than alcohol, which is legal, generates tax revenue and creates jobs in which you do not end up in prison.

That, or once you reach adulthood, the rituals of adolescence such as smoking pot, should be dropped as you try to be a responsible adult who understands the importance of obeying the law and setting an example for your children.



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*
**60-year wait
for recognition
finally over**

Ken Oakes just wanted a little respect.

Sixty years later, he's got it, and from a prime minister of Great Britain, no less.

Now 81 and retired to Stouffville, Ken was a teenager growing up in England during the Second World War.

After four years studying to be a signaller in the sea cadets, he wanted to join the Navy. But, at age 18, he was conscripted at random to work in the coal mines during the war.

That he did, for four years.

He was one of the Bevin Boys, as the drafted coal miners were called.

"They have never been honoured and were never looked at as part of the forces," said his daughter, Anne Salvagna. "He was even turned away at any (Royal British Legion) when he tried to apply stating he was a veteran. They told him no he was not considered a veteran. It was always a sore spot with him."

Then-prime minister Tony Blair provided some ointment more than six decades later, promising the creation of special badges for the boys.

"I think it would give them some recognition for the tremendous work that they have done," he said.

Yes, indeedly.

Ken met his wife, Doreen, when they worked in a cotton mill after the war. They moved to Canada in 1954, settled on the west side of the GTA and had two children. Ken worked for Coleman and the Halton school board before retiring.

But the value of his days in the mines as part of the war effort always nagged at him. At least until his badge arrived in the mail this spring.

It won't get him in the Navy or erase the rejections at the legion, but it feels right.

"It's about time the Bevin Boys were recognized for doing our part in the war," he said. "It feels good to be finally recognized as a veteran, even after it taking 60 years."

It feels so good, the Parkview Village resident wears the badge whenever he goes out. As he should.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Renovate another old building, leave bowling centre alone

Re: Displaced bowlers send petition, delegation to council, April 5.

So, finally we learn the real reason, for the bowling centre closure.

The owner wants to give his son and friends their own medical centre. It's doctors we need, not more medical centres.

Anyway, there are places in town that badly need upgrading; use one of them instead of closing a very popular, unique facility/business.

I have an idea. How about letting the residents vote?

No, that wouldn't be allowed.

Unfortunately, with the mayor and his council cronies backing the proposal, it's obviously "a done deal".

Never mind what the peasants need/want: Councillor Bartley will decide for us. If the mayor has any input, it will probably be a curling arena instead. Anything icy.

The story also mentions municipalities sometimes offer doctors "perks" (money) for settling in their community. No prizes for guessing if Stouffville residents will be "perky".

What will happen to the other adjacent businesses and tenants in the block, including the fire hall?

Will they eventually become a car park for the medical centre of Whitchurch-Stouffville, when the new fire hall is completed?

JOAN MAY
STOUFFVILLE

HAVE YOUR SAY

► What do you think of these issues?
E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

Arts groups needs imagination, details to use smaller 19 on Park facility

Re: Lack of applause from arts community on 19 Park?, column by Jim Mason, April 10.

The limited response is hardly surprising when you look back over the last four years, and count up the number of council meetings that have been held on a theatre centre idea.

These meetings were standing room only, filled with arts supporters and organization representatives, only to have the council turn down the various proposals and throw cold water over the arts enthusiasts there.

We are in support of the new plan even though it is very small. Good things can come from small beginnings. It will take a lot of imagination for groups to decide how to make the space useful.

No one has come forward to my knowledge, to detail the final design and equipment that will be available.

The arts community needs to know more about the facility.

It is now time to get the public involved, get them enthused, buying bricks and seats.

Making this a useful first step toward Arts Stouffville coming into being.

GEORGE AND JANE BISHOP
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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

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