

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Would sports fans back regional team?

York Region may be the ultimate Toronto bedroom community.

As GTA suburbs go, it's the only one without a regional sports team to call its own.

Think about it.

Durham Region has the grand-daddy of all franchises in the area, the Oshawa Generals of the Ontario Hockey League. These are the Generals of Bobby Orr, Eric Lindros and, now, John Tavares.

Peel has the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors. Halton is home to the Brampton Battalion.

To our north, the Barrie Colts draw fans from across Simcoe County and into York as one of the OHL's model franchises.

Most OHL teams average more than 2,000 fans per game. Some, including the London Knights and Ottawa 67s, approach five figures every night.

In York Region, big draws are the Jr. A hockey, which is one level below the OHL, pro soccer in Vaughan and some high school sports.

But those games draw fans in the hundreds, not the thousands. Empty seats abound at Jr. A games in five York Region centres all winter long.

That's pretty sad in a community of one million people. A community that has been home to national Jr. A championship teams, both from Aurora, during this decade.

Sure, we've already had the OHL here, briefly. The former Cornwall Royals franchise was in Newmarket for two years in the early 1990s before moving to Samia and becoming the Sting.

More recently, there have been rumours of teams moving to Newmarket and Markham.

OHL commissioner Dave Branch, in a radio interview late last year where Aurora was mentioned as a possible home for an OHL team, blamed the lack of local media for poor attendance in Peel and Halton. He sees similar problems in York Region.

We disagree. If there's a problem in the suburbs, it's the lack of identity. People here think of themselves as Torontonians first when it comes to entertainment and sports.

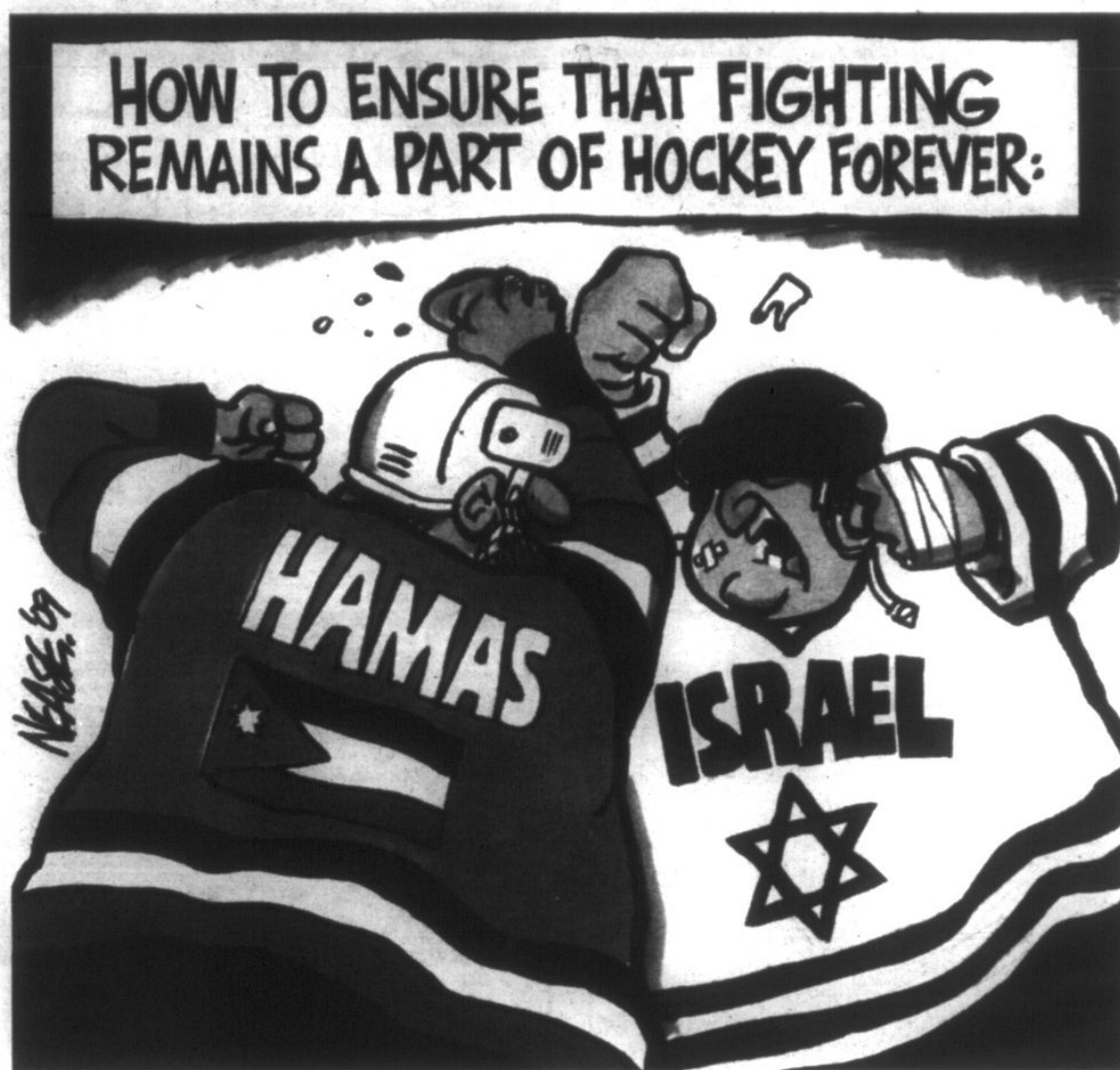
Sadly, they're Toronto Maple Leaf fans not hockey fans.

The problem is exacerbated in York Region, where we have no local team for all to rally around.

Tell us, sports fans of York Region. Would you support an OHL team in your back yard?

Or, are you content to spend hundreds of dollars on NHL tickets for a team in a neighbouring municipality?

Is this really hockey country, or just a faceless suburb when it comes to sports teams?



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Trouble in paradise? Pass the cheap wine, forget the politics

Leave the country for a couple of weeks and you can gain a new perspective on some things.

And not just that snow sucks, no matter how much it can be romanticized in carols and on Christmas cards.

"I like my snow - on TV," a smiling southern airport baggage handler told me as I headed back to reality on the weekend.

Thanks, pal.

More reality from a holiday sojourn:

- When Americans aren't bemoaning their economy, they have politics on the mind.

Common themes? Trouble in Illinois and "How could we elect George W. Bush, twice?"

- Hockey is of no consequence south of the snowbelt, unless it's the NHL's annual outdoor game.

There's something apparently titillating about watching 40,000 people, several of them shirtless and quaffing cold beers, outside in Arctic conditions.

- People from all over the world know Canada mainly for Vancouver and Toronto. They think we're nice and friendly with cleaner-than-average big cities.

Many think we all speak French regularly. No one asked if we live in an igloo or travel on snowshoes, thankfully.

- The Pinot Grigio I sometimes sip with dinner costs \$8.95 for a 750-ml bottle at the LCBO. Three litres of the same at a wine supermarket in Fort Lauderdale was \$16. Sure, it's made in California, but that price puts duty free shopping to shame.

- *The Love Guru* is as bad a movie as has been made. It should be banned from all in-flight film offerings.

- You can still get an SUV limo trip home to Stouffville from Pearson International for \$75. It beats the heck out of scraping ice off your own SUV after you've dug a trail to get at the scraper.

Happy new year, Whitchurch-Stouffville. Only two or three more months of heavy sledding to get through.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

Letters to the Editor

Funeral director deserves salute

Re: Funeral director always had compliment for her employee, column by Jim Thomas, Dec. 28.

Kudos to Mr. Thomas for his praise of retired funeral director Robin Walsh.

She deserves the gratitude of many Stouffvillites who have met with her in their most vulnerable moments. We are all indebted to a woman who has given much of her life to making our darkest days a little easier.

How difficult it must have been at times for her to see acquaintances forced to use other funeral homes because O'Neill was built for yesteryears, with rooms too small for large funerals compounded by limited parking.

We have lived in Stouffville since the early 1970s and question the Harbour franchise's reluctance to build larger facilities in a fast-growing town with plenty of available industrial land.

To her credit, Robin did the best with the facilities she had. Robin, ever gracious, accommodating, dignified with a hidden sense of humour, we salute you. Enjoy your retirement.

JOSIE SCHWARZLI
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Recycling isn't just about the money

Re: York Region anticipates \$6 million revenue loss this year, story by David Fleischer, Dec. 10.

York Region's recent contingency plan for recyclable matters during unstable market conditions was written to address a temporary financial problem: a decrease in the market for recyclables. However, the plan seems to have lost sight of the reason

we all started recycling in the first place — because it was in the best interest of the health of people and the environment.

Two of the plan's contingency options actually included diverting less-profitable recyclables and composting to landfill or to Dongara and Coventa until the market prices return to normal.

York Region Environmental Alliance has great concerns about the manufacturing of pellets from garbage currently done in Vaughan and the subsequent burning of the pellets in other locations. There has not been sufficient environmental evaluation and the process is seemingly exempt from the more stringent environmental assessments required by the province.

We would like to see York Region or the City of Vaughan demand a full environmental assessment and put into place third party testing so citizens can know the long-term effect of pelletization and the burning of pellets before considering the addition of more plastic materials.

Yes, we are experiencing a financial crisis, but our values and integrity should not change just because of a blip in the economy. Contingency plans like this will undoubtedly lead to crises of a different kind, health and environmental ones.

It is a good time for the region and municipalities to look at other options and engage the citizens and businesses. Why not promote the reduction of waste, particularly plastics, metals and Styrofoam? Choose products with less or no packaging, read the newspaper online or shred and compost newspaper. There are many options and it is an excellent opportunity to engage people.

KAREN BUCKLE
YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

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