

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Healthy food prices should be set

Here's a question to ponder during this 'Heart Month': If provincial governments regulate the price of alcohol, why aren't prices of healthy foods such as milk, vegetables and fruits regulated?

The Heart and Stroke Foundation this week released a report with evidence that families in different provinces, different regions and even different parts of the same city, pay widely varied amounts for basic food items for their tables. The report suggests low-income and single-parent families often can't afford to feed their families healthy foods which can be too expensive on reduced budgets.

The foundation's annual health report card revealed huge inconsistencies in price and accessibility of healthy food across the country. For example, if you buy your groceries in Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood, you will pay seven per cent more for healthy food than in Thornhill and up to 14 per cent more than in parts of Scarborough.

It's estimated that up to 80 per cent of coronary heart disease and stroke can be prevented through lifestyle, including healthy eating.

Yet the survey found almost half of Canadians said they're going without fresh fruit, vegetables, milk and lean meat because they're too costly.

So what to do? Heart and Stroke officials and other health advocates say governments and individual Canadians have a role to play. Provincial and federal governments should adjust provincial income assistance and minimum wage rates to enable households to afford the basic costs of living and healthy foods for their families. Employment Insurance should be reformed to increase access.

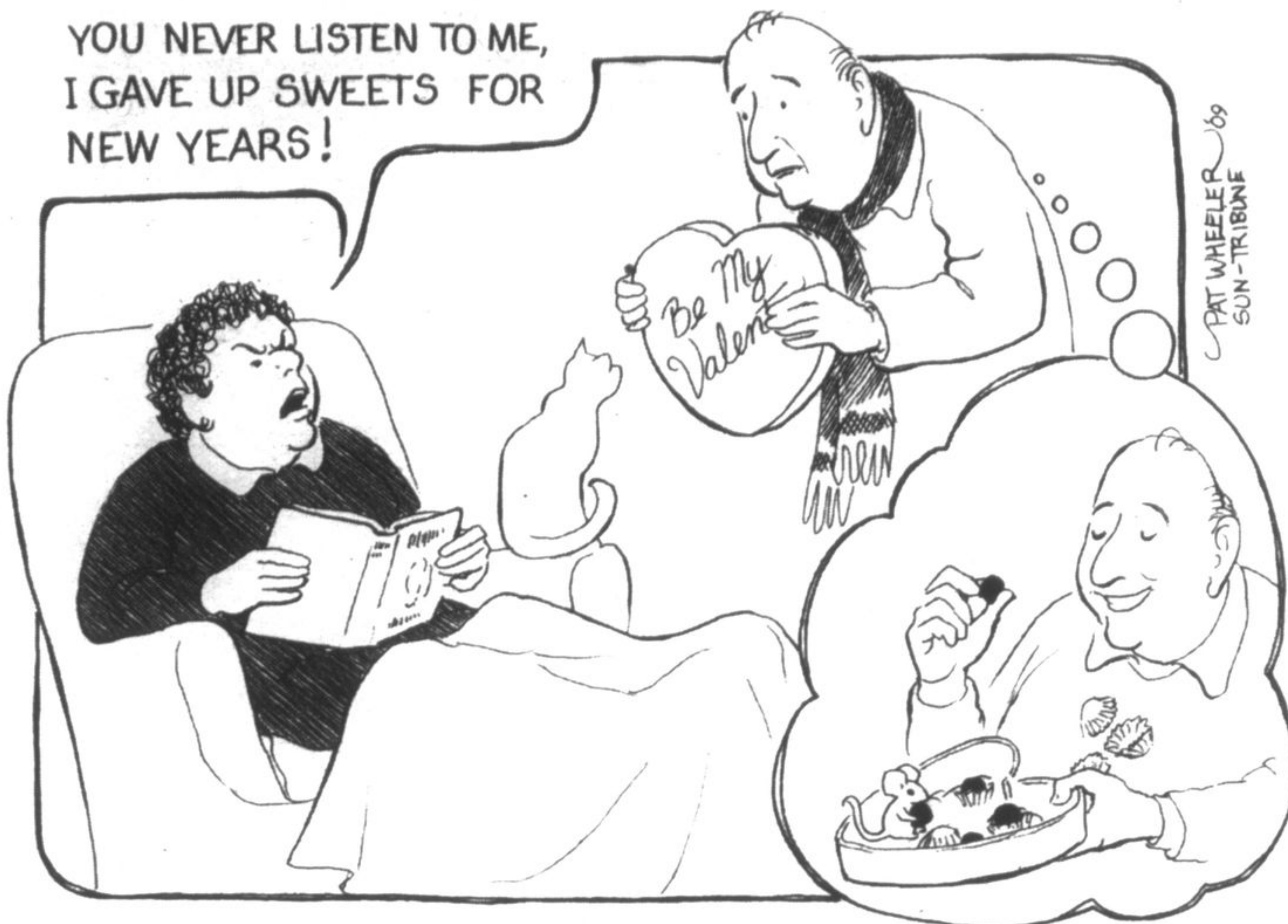
If prices of liquor and beer can be controlled, surely prices of nutritious foods across all regions of Canada (especially remote and northern locations) can also be regulated.

What can ordinary Canadians do? Support sustainable community programs (such as community kitchens and gardens) that promote the availability and affordability of fresh, locally or regionally-grown foods.

We can 'shop Ontario' for foods in season and support our own farmers who grow the freshest fruits and vegetables we can trust.

There are community garden plots for urban growers, too. York Region Food Network funds and coordinates three community gardens to improve access to fresh, affordable food.

And we can become balcony or backyard farmers ourselves. Every salad can help every family member keep healthier today and avoid costly medical care tomorrow.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason
Should trip to variety store be a gamble?

The woman in front of me at the Main Street convenience store had it down to a science.

Or so she thought. Her lucky numbers were on one side of her big red wallet, her unchecked tickets on the other and the cash to feed the habit tightly in hand.

After what seemed like 10 minutes, she geefully left with another mittful of tickets, many of them rewards from earlier games, and dreams of a jackpot. I could only hope the milk in my hand hadn't soured.

Getting what's left of my hair cut later in the week, the talk had elevated to casino gambling. The barber shop chorus weighed in on the benefits of all things Rama, Niagara, Georgian Downs and Port Perry.

Back at my desk, the faxed (yes, some people still use them) media releases rolled in from what should be called the Ontario Ministry of Gambling. "LOTTO 6/49 draw worth an estimated \$16 million!" and "Toronto couple thrilled to win \$13.6 million jackpot" were two headlines in the pile.

It's as if this is Atlantic City or Las Vegas. You can't get away from it, even here in Ontario the pure.

I must admit, I don't get it. Gambling is not one of my vices.

I haven't bought a lottery ticket since David Peterson was premier.

I have been in exactly one casino in this province, while tagging along on a group outing way up north one night. Dalton McGuinty won't be building too many hospitals on the \$15 I dropped.

Last time I went to the horse races, Uxbridge-Stouffville harness legend Cam Fella was still running. The Pacing Machine retired in 1984.

I know there's a mix of fun and charity in it all. But I also know I've got a better chance of walking on the moon than winning large.

The province didn't build its chain of casinos, race-track slots and lottery kiosks to give money away, did it?

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Common sense would solve problem

Re: Too many vehicles, not enough spaces, Jan. 24.

Did I really read this article correctly? Residents are complaining that there are not enough spaces to park their cars? Perhaps someone should remind them that they walked into the purchase of their homes with their eyes wide open.

If you are a family that has four or more cars, then don't purchase a home that only provides a single-car garage and a single-car driveway.

As I understand it, most of these homeowners do not even use the garage to house their cars. This is a choice made by them and the town should not be burdened with this problem.

Most streets are hard enough to drive down without trying to weave in and out of all the parked cars during the winter months.

Seems to me that a little common sense on the part of the homeowners is all that is needed here.

L. CONWAY
STOUFFVILLE

Provide more access to Memorial Park

The road from Hoover Park Drive to the Lebovic Leisure Centre in southern Stouffville is great.

A little cul-de-sac should have been built at the end with parking space. I can visualize pathways exiting that parking area to the various favourite places to be found in the park. Quiet places with shade trees, safe with no traffic, a place to sit, rest and enjoy a great park atmosphere.

Market Street needs a little help for the Lebovic Centre traffic, but that is a planning problem. There

were a couple of public meetings on Memorial Park where I suggested we hold off building the road through the park to Main Street. Wait and see what would really work when the new residents moved in and let them have a say in the matter.

Well like a broken record, again, I say "wait and see". But do it with parking available in a cul-de-sac at the south end of the park.

BOB LEWIS
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Cancel property tax hike, McGuinty

The property tax assessment values established by MPAC should be rolled back to the original values. It's been stated the value of homes has decreased by 10 per cent in the GTA and eight per cent across the 905 area.

How can MPAC increase property values when realty property values are decreasing? And we still haven't felt the full effect of the economic problem.

Premier McGuinty, we are asking you, once again, to cancel this unjust property tax increase.

Once before, the Ontario government found it necessary to cancel the assessment value increases as a result a property owners' rebellion.

If Mr. McGuinty fails to react on my concerns, I can guarantee I will appeal the MPAC assessment before March 31. MPAC may not be able to handle all the appeals I believe it may receive.

Mr. McGuinty should not consider this letter a threat. It is simply the concerns of a senior property owner.

GEORGE GORRINGE
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

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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