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**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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OPINION

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Sun-Tribune**

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Editorial

Can Harper defend prorogue?

Is Prime Minister Stephen Harper once again playing Parliamentary games?

Last year, he used proroguing to avert a confidence vote that threatened to dissolve the government elected six weeks earlier.

It seems few are clear exactly why he's proroguing or suspending work by our MPs this time — and the Conservatives haven't explained it to Canadians' satisfaction. There are growing number of Facebook sites and an outpouring of angry letters to the media to show disapproval.

Some think it's a shrewd tactic by the prime minister to delay the hearings on the Afghan detainee issues. Others suspect it is to push off an election in times of dipping polls.

As for the first theory, if there's egg on the government's face, it will eventually end up there anyhow. As for the latter, current polls actually favour the Tories.

A Nov. 29 EKOS poll showed the Conservatives with a 10-per-cent lead over the Liberals. In a Nanos poll three weeks later, numbers remained about the same with 34 per cent of Canadians polled stating Mr. Harper was "the most trustworthy leader" versus 11 per cent favouring the Liberals' Michael Ignatieff. As for "the most competent leader", it was Mr. Harper again, with 35 per cent, versus Mr. Ignatieff at about 13 per cent.

The Parliamentary break was to end Jan. 25, but has been pushed back to March 3. Much legislation is now dead and some bills will have to be reintroduced, wasting MPs' time and our tax dollars.

What could the Conservatives possibly do in 22 sitting days to significantly improve their standing?

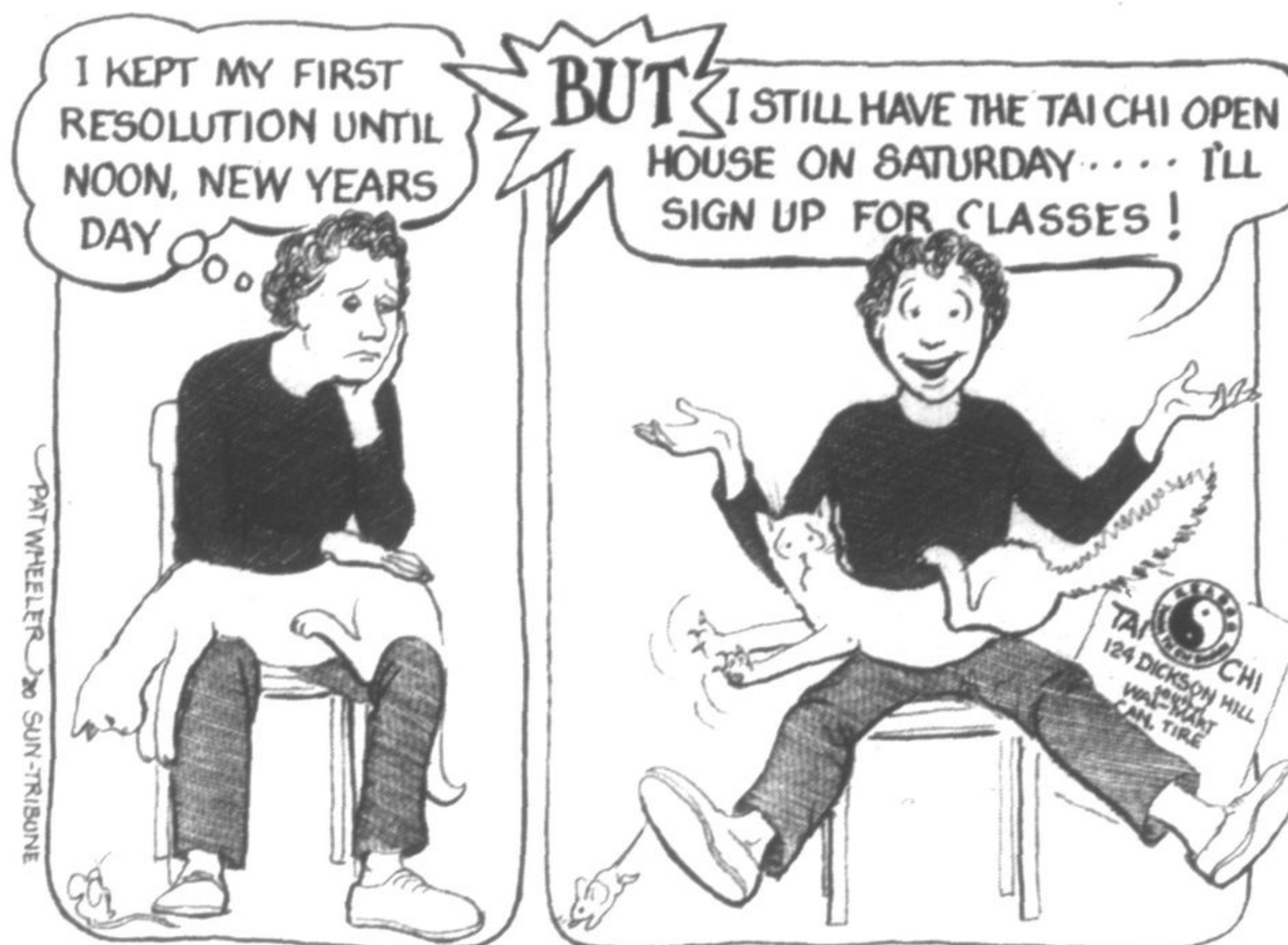
The most obvious reason to prorogue is the Winter Olympics. With Canuck news outlets stubbornly focused on Vancouver's snowboarders, ski jumpers, hockey players — and not-so-secretly hoping for a figure skating scandal — how could any big news day in Parliament ever compete?

To be sure, many MPs wouldn't turn down an opportunity to be seen in the bleachers, patriotically cheering on our athletes or rubbing elbows with them.

Proroguing Parliament is not an unusual tactic. Liberal prime minister Jean Chretien prorogued four times (once for four months) in 10 years.

It's not a very good reason to dislike or criticize Mr. Harper.

But it is a good reason to wonder why his party can't explain its political decision to Canadians.



Letters to the Editor

Life not so high-speed in rural area every day

Re: *Tough to live without electric links to world, column by Bernie O'Neill, Jan. 2.*

Mr. O'Neill experienced a small dose of everyday reality for a Whitchurch resident — life without high-speed Internet.

Much to the surprise of longtime residents and newcomers alike, the availability of high-speed Internet in rural areas of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is like a slice of Swiss cheese.

Access to high-speed Internet in agricultural areas is restricted to satellite, however, given the rolling terrain in this greenbelt, the stability of the connection and consistency of the signal strength vary from one farm to the next, leaving some in a technological black hole.

As a consolation, dial-up is readily available for the modest fee of \$25 per month. That's an exorbitant rate compared to urban areas.

Mr. O'Neill, if you found working off your neighbour's Internet signal slow, dial-up will surely test your patience even further. Try the simple tasks of e-mailing an attachment or filling out an online form with dial-up. It will take several hours.

As added frustration, municipal services can be accessed either in person or (you guessed it) online. Registering little Johnny for swimming lessons is doubly exasperating in the rather large Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and is doubly convenient for those residing in its southeastern corner.

The towns of Aurora and Markham, in contrast, offer telephone registration. For your information, Mr. O'Neill, you can easily register in the neighbouring towns using either your land line or mobile phone.

Mr. O'Neill, the grass is definitely

greener in your 500-channel universe. But access to a high-speed connection is a necessity for the self-employed, including farmers, high school students and now even for primary children.

Whitchurch residents also deal with frequent, prolonged power outages and no access to natural gas, but these issues may best be addressed in the future. Perhaps Mr. O'Neill may again be a kindred spirit, albeit a brief one.

Waiting for the 21st century in Whitchurch...

INÈS MARCHESE
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Ballantrae light much needed

Re: *Golf course community hurting traffic flow, letter to the editor by Sophie Doiron, Nov. 7.*

Ms Doiron's main concern with the traffic lights at Hwy. 48 and the Ballantrae Golf and Country Club is that they inconvenienced her on her daily trip up the highway.

She asked if we residents of the golf club have preferential treatment because Councillor Phil Bannon and Mayor Wayne Emerson live here.

The truth is we have more than 700 homes here and considerably more vehicles. All this and only one controlled intersection. During school bus hours and during "rush" hour, it was almost suicidal trying to make a left turn to the southbound lane of the highway.

Prior to the light being installed, it was not uncommon to have at least a five to 10-minute delay waiting for an opening, just to take a chance at a left-hand turn. I think the equivalent of 5 per cent of the population of Stouffville is deserving of one controlled intersection through which we can exit safely without being accused of favouritism.

DENNIS GUY
BALLANTRAE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Sprucing up what we already have

A new fire hall and downtown arts centre in 2009, with a twin pad arena and multi-sport park on their way.

Add the continued four-laning of Stouffville Road/Main Street.

And don't forget the new Whitchurch Highlands Public School, the fourth new school here in three years, rising above Bloomington Road and Warden Avenue.

On the private side, an auto mall is slated for Hwy. 48, just north of where the ultra-green Stouffville Toyota dealership is going in.

It's going to be a tough act to follow, Whitchurch-Stouffville. And not just with the development community and the construction unions.

But, there are areas of concerns. Corners that need tidying up as we modernize this municipality:

- The former Canadian Tire property on Main Street is well kept. But it's also vacant and taking up a large chunk of prime realty on our main drag.

- Further east, the old fire hall also sits empty, albeit for weeks and not years. If downtown (see new management group and multi-million-dollar Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment — Nineteen on the Park) needs another boost, how about a permanent farm market here? Let's build on the success of Year 1 of the outdoor market.

- Other properties aren't vacant and they aren't breaking any laws, but they are beyond butt ugly. The town can't fine them or close them and peer pressure from responsible landowners in the neighbourhood doesn't work. What's a community to do?

Spruce it up.
Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.