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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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# OPINION

Stouffville  
**Sun-Tribune**

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## Editorial

### Treat drunk drivers before they hit road

One area MPP wants the province to look on the "human side" of alcoholism for those who repeatedly get behind the wheel while drunk.

Drinking and driving is certainly not a new problem in Canada, where alcohol abuse costs millions of dollars in law enforcement, health care and productivity losses every year. And the problem doesn't seem to be getting any better, according to statistics provided by Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

For years, MADD has been calling on all governments to get tougher on repeat drunk drivers and cites \$3 billion in Canadian enforcement costs as a good reason to take action.

In York Region, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees is asking the province to invest in more addiction treatment beds and easier access to those spaces to get at the root of repeat impaired drivers.

It's a mantra that has fallen on deaf ears, but one that reignites when the community learns of the colossal failure of a system that is being carelessly flouted by offenders too sick to care.

Just look at the facts of this case: Richard Raven, 62, of Vaughan has 10 convictions for driving while impaired or in excess of the legal limit, five convictions for driving while being disqualified from doing so, four convictions for not complying with court orders and a driving-related conviction for criminal negligence, according to a May 2 sentencing decision.

He admits to being an alcoholic who wants treatment, but doesn't qualify under the province's guidelines.

Treatment was not available to him while he was in pre-sentence custody for more than three months.

When you look at the statistics of repeat offenders who disregard court-ordered driving bans, most will agree the system is not working.

More co-ordination needs to take place between police, the court system and province to crack down on this crime.

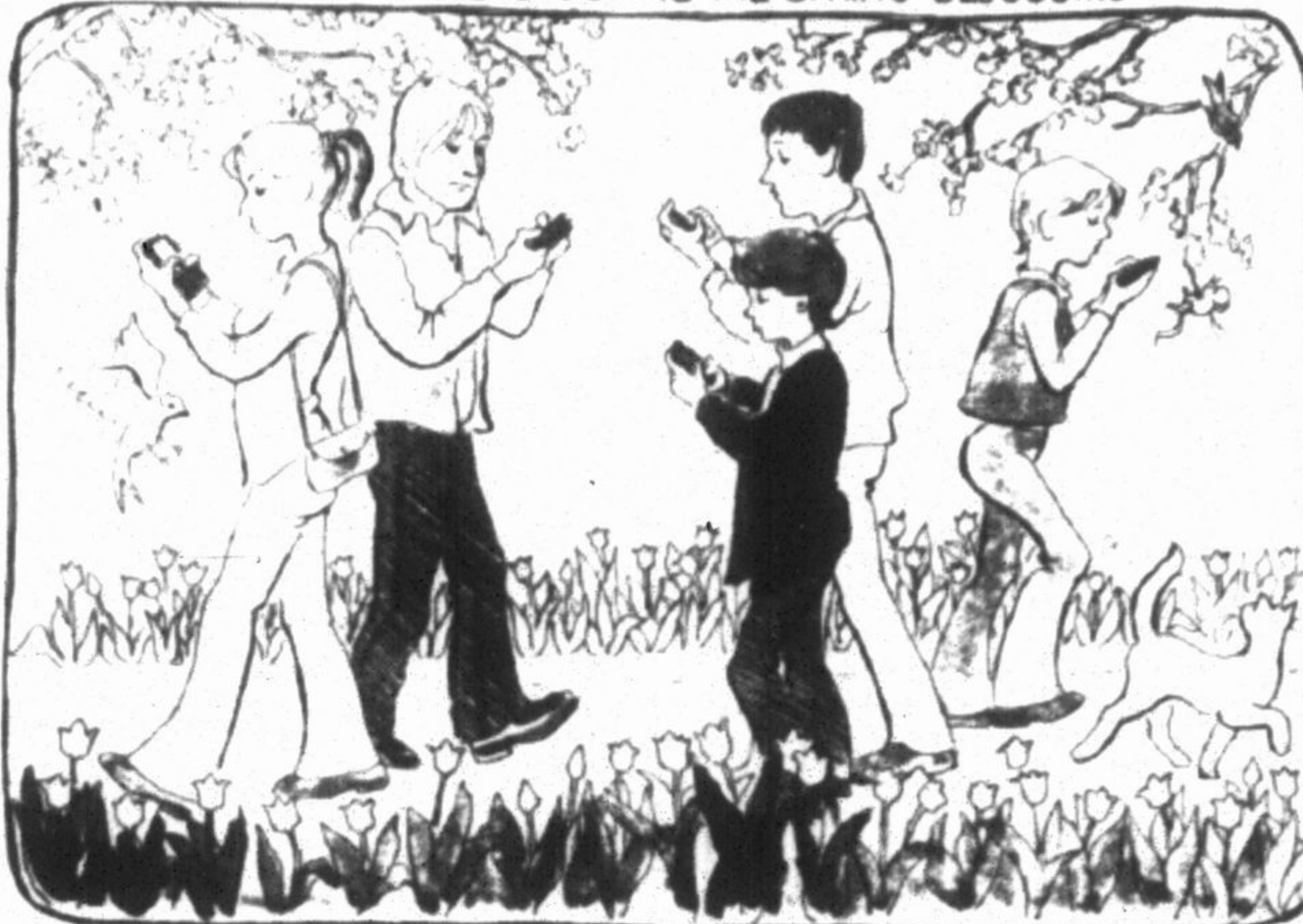
The first thing that should happen is the repeat offender's vehicle should be seized.

The offender should be banned from driving for life.

Most importantly, the person must enter mandatory treatment for a specified period and have his blood tested regularly for a set period of time.

We need preventive measures such as mandatory treatment, blood tests and laws targeting family and friends who enable drunk driving by loaning vehicles.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ENJOYING THE SPRING BLOSSOMS



## Letters to the Editor

### We should use plastic bags

Re: Plastic compost bag ban in effect, May 7.

Here we go again. Another step to save the environment. But is it?

The tax man makes money (HST) on the bags. The retailer, wholesaler, manufacturer, suppliers, stockholders and whomever gets paid off on the side all make money.

Who loses? Me and the other consumers. And to what good? We should be able to use any plastic bag.

In any case, the banning of plastic bags is not necessarily the best policy. A recent study by the Environment Agency of England finds plastic bags have a smaller carbon footprint than reusable plastic or cotton satchels as well as disposable paper bags.

According to Evidence. Life Cycle Assessment of Supermarket Carrier Bags, one might have to reuse a "fashionable cotton bag" at least 131 times to equal the low carbon footprint of a simple plastic bag. If we reuse a plastic bag - as a waste basket liner perhaps - they pull even further away as the greenest technology.

Other studies have shown reusable bags provide a wonderful breeding ground for E. coli and other bacteria.

That is, unless you wash them regularly.

But if you do that, Ken Green at the American Enterprise Institute notes that all that bleach, soap and hot water expands their carbon footprint as well.

The paper bag can be more deserving of outlaw status, if you measure the worth of something solely by its carbon footprint.

So the unpretentious plastic bag is far from perfect, but it is even further from the plague than it is made out to be. The British study was commis-

sioned in 2005 but wasn't released until this February.

It is alleged by some it might have been suppressed by "Greens" inside the former Labour government.

Let us reuse our supermarket plastic bags in trash bins. Technology can solve the problem of separating them from compost materials and, in the long run, save the consumer several dollars.

ROCKY SANKOFF  
STOUFFVILLE

### Businesses, volunteers teamed up for Parkview

Last year, some members of Stouffville Garden Club decided to answer a plea for help from Parkview Village.

We built planters, replaced the gardens in the courtyard at the neighbouring long-term care home and appealed for donations of trees and shrubs.

The response was overwhelming, and almost everything was finished. The trees and shrubs couldn't be planted until this year due to some drainage work that had to be done.

I want to thank the companies who have helped. Without Walters Perennials on St. John's Road, Gary Bouwmeister, Shan Tennyson, Scott Burrows of Farmer Jack's, Tom Patterson of Eagle Ridge Tree Movers and Ron Schell of Schell Lumber, we could not have done this.

There were also many hard workers who helped with this project.

We still get together at Parkview every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. to keep the gardens looking nice. Anyone who enjoys digging in the soil is welcome to come and help.

DIANE WARD  
STOUFFVILLE GARDEN CLUB



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Socialist deja vu on O'Brien Ave.

Is there something in the air on O'Brien Avenue in Stouffville?

With a tinge of orange perhaps? Mylene Freeman, the freshly elected NDP candidate for Argenteuil-Papineau-Mirabel in Quebec, grew up on the street, one of the prettiest and oldest in the heart of our community.

It's vintage, small-town Ontario, with its stately verandas, wide shade trees and deep lots.

Ms Freeman, 22, is not alone, as far as nationally known, left-leaning products of the avenue go.

Frank Underhill grew up across the street, albeit 100 years earlier.

Born in 1989, he spent his first year on the planet above his father's shoe store on Main Street, before his dad had the stately family home built at 82 O'Brien.

That's according to his biography, written by R. Douglas Francis and provided to me by Stephen Sword.

(The book also makes reference to a young Frank not being allowed to play with "the rough and boisterous boys along Main Street".)

A shy boy, Frank Underhill parlayed local schooling and a love for reading into post-secondary studies at Toronto and Oxford and jobs teaching history at three universities across Canada.

But he's best know - here's your connection, Ms Freeman - as a founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation who helped write its Regina Manifesto in 1933. The CCF would eventually morph into what's now the NDP - under whose banner Ms Freeman was elected last week.

Mr. Underhill, who would drift to the centre from his socialist roots, was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1967. He died four years later.

Small world, indeed, neighbour.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.