

Sun-Tribune

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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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Editorial

Open program to all Ontarians

This week, the province is helping Ontarians butt out by funding prescriptions of smoking cessation drugs Champix and Zyban through the Ontario Drug Benefit Plan.

Doling out \$10 to \$15 million annually is a solid investment, it says, as tobacco-related illnesses cost Ontario's health-care system \$1.6 billion annually.

From this perspective, it's a solid plan. So why stop there?

Simple. It's politics.

For one thing, the Ontario Drug Benefit Plan is only for people who qualify, which excludes those with a plan offered through an employer. If the province wanted all smokers to quit, it would open up the program to all Ontarians.

In 2005 (the most recent statistics available), slightly fewer than five million Canadians aged 15 and older were smokers — 19 per cent of the population, according to the Canadian Cancer Society.

According to the province, almost one-quarter of the \$47-billion annual health care budget is used to treat preventable diseases, such as those caused by tobacco and alcohol use. Wouldn't we be able to save a great deal of this amount if the one in five of us who light up kicked the habit?

Again, it sounds like a worthy investment.

But there's more money to consider, namely the more than \$1 billion the province netted in tax revenues from tobacco sales in 2009-2010. While it's a fraction of what the province says it spends to treat diseases caused by tobacco use, it's still a large chunk of change that would disappear if everyone quit smoking.

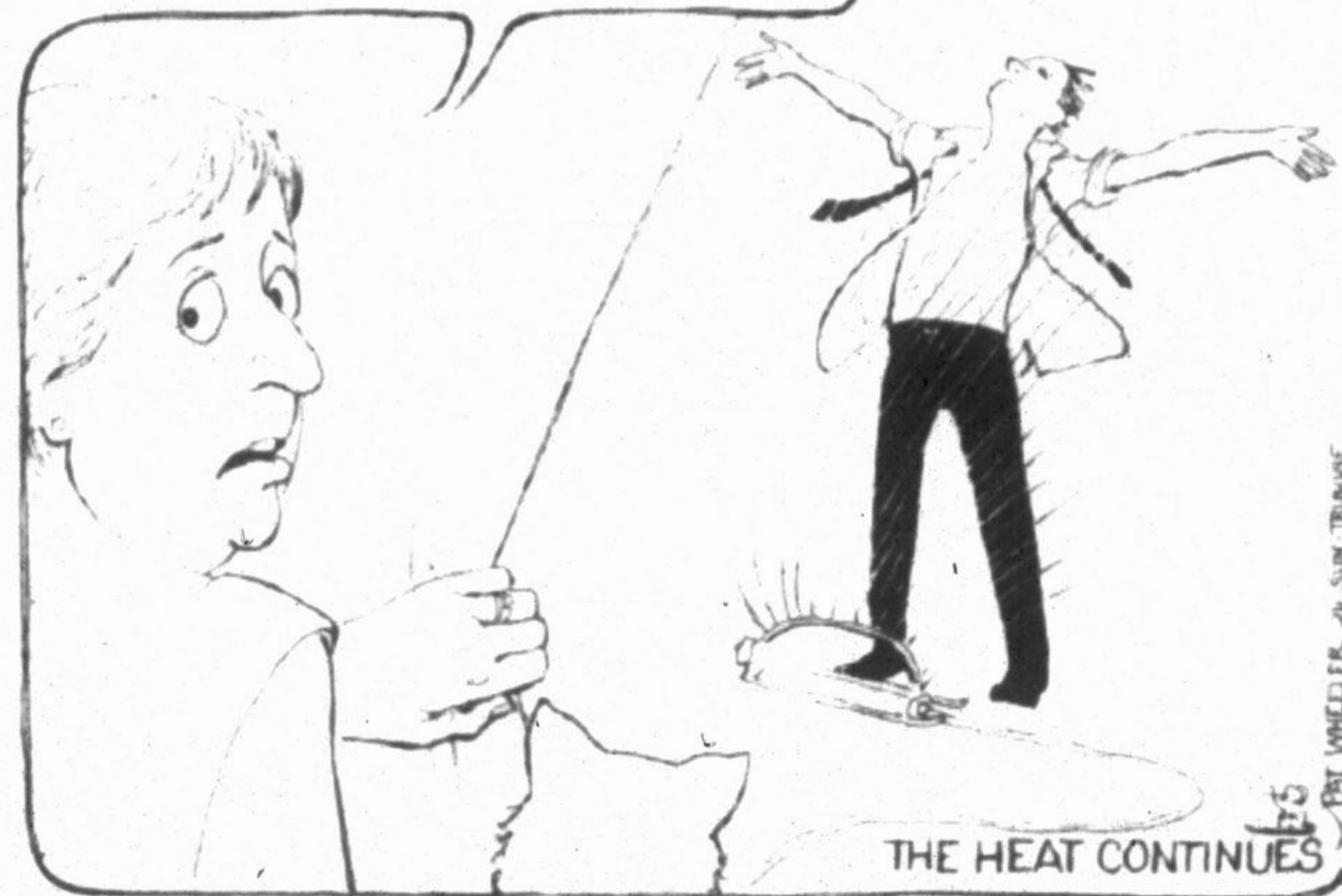
It's one of many reasons — not the least of which is the spectre of a massive public backlash — behind why Ontario doesn't simply ban the use of tobacco for good, even though, from a health perspective, it's the right thing to do.

Instead, we'll continue to see the introduction of incremental, low-cost cessation measures, such as the recent ban against smoking in cars with children, as the province works to figure out how to make up the financial shortfall it would suffer if the industry simply went away.

Yet in this case, while there certainly would be a cost involved in funding all smoking-cessation prescriptions, it seems it would be money well spent to ensure all Ontario smokers have access to low-cost cessation measures, such as Champix and Zyban.

After all, any measure that reduces the pressure on our overburdened health care system is worthy of closer inspection.

THERE'S A GUY IN OUR SPRINKLER!



Letters to the Editor

Safety can be legislated

Re: Drownings changed little, July 30.
According to Councillor Phil Bannon, "We can't legislate common sense and you don't want to legislate common sense."

What the heck do you call our laws for mandatory seatbelts and bicycle helmets for kids?

If you think you can rely on common sense for the protection of our children, you are not living in the same world as I do.

JONATHAN PAULL
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Drownings become personal for lake community

Re: Saddened lake community should be proud of response, letter to the editor by M. Keys, July 28.

My family and I have taken up residence "On the Lake" (or within the community of the lake to be specific) in the last couple of years.

We, too, heard the sirens and search and rescue helicopter flying over our house July 19 and wondered what was happening.

I agree with M. Keys in the fact that, no, the lake is not haunted. But, what does spook me as a resident is the fact these two girls who drowned could have been our own children, or a sister, or cousin.

And I think what makes this story special and touches us all so deeply is the fact the Musselman's Lake community is so small the members of the community personalize a tragedy such as this so deeply. I feel for the fathers of the girls and the families.

I am from New York City originally and you would think sirens would be commonplace for me.

HAVE YOUR SAY

► What do you think of these issues or others? E-mail letters to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

For me, yes, Musselman's Lake is spooky in its silence and I think partly I do miss the noise from the busy rush, rush of NYC where a siren is just another noise you ignore and then drift off to sleep. Oh, it's just part of the big city.

But, for me the larger question is not whether or not the lake is haunted, which almost sounds like a Stephen King movie.

For me, it should be a question of our reaction to what spooks us. And how we should take responsibility for those around us.

To the victims and their families, our thoughts and prayers are with you. May God be with you because I didn't hear you cry. I just ignored the sirens.

MARY ANN DELOREY
MUSSELMAN'S LAKE

Aboriginal name good start

Re: Aboriginal name for Stouffville's next school, July 22

Congratulations to the York public school board and the community for honouring this important aspect of Stouffville's history.

Let's hope the new school's name, Wendat Village, provides a starting point for students, teachers and parents to learn more about local First Nations, past and present.

MYLES O'BRIEN
STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Still pumped over dream ride

What was your first summer job? Me? I pumped 50-cent gallons — not litres, kids — of Gulf gasoline on the main drag of my home town.

We dished it, and complimentary car washes, out on hot summer nights into everything from station wagons taking corpses to the funeral home up the road to vans carrying rock bands to their next gig down Hwy. 61 or 17.

The odd AMC Gremlin or Pacer broke up the monotony back on those night shifts in the 1970s.

But it was the near steady stream of muscle cars that made \$1.65 an hour and heavy, dark coveralls almost palatable.

It was our own *American Graffiti* live every night with all of those beefed-up and buffed 1957 Bel-Airs, '72 Novas and every Mustang, Camaro and Firebird the UAW ever made stopping in.

The drivers poured so much from their own union jobs into their rides, they only had change to buy gas with. It's no wonder few of them ever had dates.

Still, it was another car that caught my fancy — the 1970 Chevelle SS.

I told myself I'd own one. But with my mechanical skills still limited to pumping gas, RRRP invoices and tuition bills on the horizon and that model's average price online around \$25,000, I don't see an SS in my driveway in the future.

Vin Diesel rocked a sweet '70 Chevelle in the *Fast and the Furious*. There's a slick ragtop version driving through the video to Brad Paisley's Old Alabama.

I plan to drool over others in person at car shows Wednesday nights at the Royal Canadian Legion, Aug. 14 at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and Sept. 19 at the Stouffville Country Market.

The dream can live on.
Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.