

EDITORIAL

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**LETTERS
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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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Open lakes to everyone

Re: Stouffville beach closed to public, June 7.

During the past 20 years, residents of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville have lost public access to Preston Lake and now to Musselman's Lake as well.

Councillor Phil Bannon noted it's "a terrible loss" for him and the community, but "it's private property. It's a private beach. It's a private enterprise."

What seems to be forgotten is that Musselman's and Preston lakes are not private; natural lakes in Canada are Crown property. These lakes are owned by all of us and their regulation paid for by all of us.

While other lakes can be accessed publicly by a river system, these "kettle lakes" were formed by deposits of retreating glaciers and not by rivers. This unique feature requires creative legal and legislative strategies to protect public access. Here are some ideas.

First, Mr. Bannon notes the

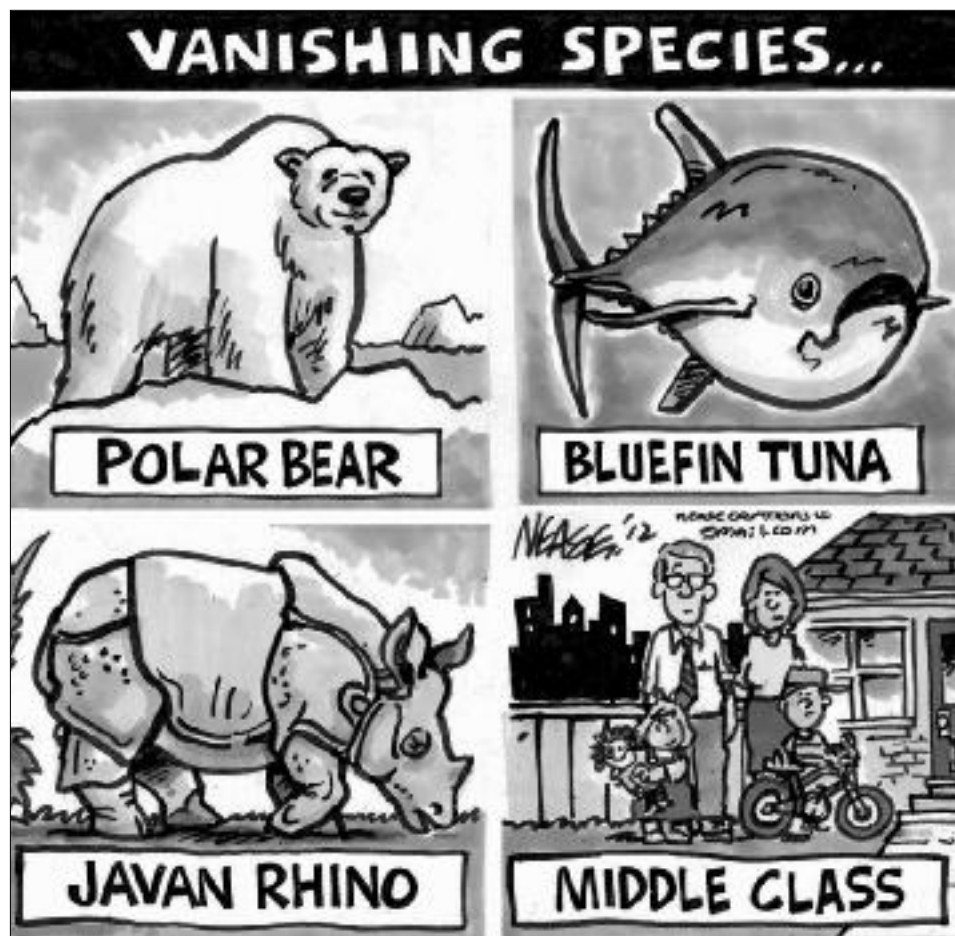
property is "a historical venue for our community"—and he is correct. Council should therefore seek a historical designation to protect the property and beach for future generations. This would keep it from the fate of Preston Lake; a beach and trailer park was sold for the development of estate properties and public access was lost.

Second, since kettle lakes do not have access by river, the town must guarantee public access by trail.

Third, revise the property tax for those residents with exclusive, deeded access to our public lakes. If there is no public access, they should pay the full user-costs associated with their regulation.

A "terrible loss" for the community calls for leadership that will employ creative legislative options to regain and protect access to our town's most important natural and recreational resources — for everyone.

ARNOLD NEUFELDT-FAST
STOUFFVILLE



It's tough love time for teachers, Premier Dad

I feel for you, Premier Dad.

You spoil them rotten, giving them practically everything they ask for — in my case, that means constantly handing out money to the kids for movies and the mall; driving them all over at all hours of the day and night and/or allowing them to drive the car, full of gas I paid for; buying \$90 sweatpants and \$200 slouchy boots, fancy phones and laptops; and forking out for countless sports tournament trips and vacations to warm climates.

In your case, that means giving teachers a 12-per-cent wage increase over four years in 2008, making Ontario's teachers the second highest paid in the world, ranging from \$41,000-plus to nearly \$93,000 for elementary teachers and \$94,600 for secondary teachers.

Heaven forbid, Premier Dad, that you should ask for something in return when you're up against the wall and what you get is whining, wailing, rolling eyes and slamming doors.

Oh, that's me.

But you're paying the price, Premier Dad, for making teachers your pets during the last eight years.

The economy has tanked, leav-



Debora Kelly

ing most of us grappling with a higher cost of living on the same or decreased salaries.

More than 600,000 Ontarians lost jobs, with companies such as RIM and GM still announcing big cuts. The unemployment rate in York Region and its neighbouring communities is an alarming 8.7 per cent.

Yes, it's time for tough love, with teacher contracts expiring in August and a \$15-billion deficit to face.

And it is love. We admire and respect our teachers, most of whom are caring, committed and passionate about their profession. By no stretch of imagination could you call their jobs easy.

For most of us, this isn't about bashing teachers; it's about Ontario's economic reality.

So, Premier Dad, it's fair you are seeking appreciation in the form of a two-year wage freeze and changes to the salary grid, pension plans and payouts for banked sick days.

These aren't grievous requests — even the unions admit a wage freeze may be in order — but the unions are "insulted" by the ultimatum.

Do it or I'll take away your cellphone ... er... or I'll legislate it, you're telling them, Premier Dad.

I'm just saying, this do-it-or-else gambit typically backfired for me, so I now feign parental rationality and no longer tell them to pack their bags if they don't like it. (Because they will.)

We agree, Premier Dad, it's only fair teachers — and anybody else making a living on the taxpayers' back — should do their part.

The fact is teachers will still have job security and perks out of reach of most Ontarians. Nobody feels sorry for teachers.

So hats off to the Catholic teachers union, which brokered a deal last week, after convincing Premier Dalton McGuinty to approve negotiation.

The two-year agreement includes a wage freeze, loss of sick days and three unpaid days, equal to a 1.5-per-cent pay cut that will finance the \$7,000 "grid" hike new teachers will still get.

If all the unions got on board, the province would save \$790 million over two years. Admittedly, a drop in the \$15-billion-deficit bucket.

The high school and French-language teachers unions have decided to meet with the government, while elementary teachers are still just threatening to hold a one-day walkout if the province legislates a deal.

While the unions say teachers will be back at school, strike votes will take place this summer or early fall.

Premier Dad, we agree, teachers, too, have to help Ontario get back on its fiscal feet, regardless of whose fault it is. But give them a chance to talk about it before you ground them ... er... legislate the terms of the deal.

And teachers, get back to the bargaining table, and if you don't like the result, at least you get to vote against this Dad in the next election.

Debora Kelly is editor in chief of the York Region media group