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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

We all can help end homelessness

Everybody in the community plays a role to help each other and if you have people in your community who are homeless, then you're not playing a role."

The words of precocious Grade 4 Richmond Hill student Vivek Dhillon should give us pause for thought and cause for inspiration.

On learning of the plight of homeless youth, the nine-year-old wanted to find a way to help — and give hope. He has already raised more than \$1,000 for a youth shelter by selling a video game he created (agameofhope.blogspot.ca).

We're blessed to live in communities in which even the youngest of citizens are aware of those less fortunate and are compelled to make a difference, in whatever small way.

It's all too easy to accept people are homeless due to some fault of their own, or simply forget they are even there.

Last week's sub-zero cold snap was an urgent reminder we should not — and cannot — ignore the people without homes in our communities.

With donations and some government grants, it's volunteers, such as those at Inn from the Cold and Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold, who are responding to a critical need by providing emergency shelter, meals and clothing.

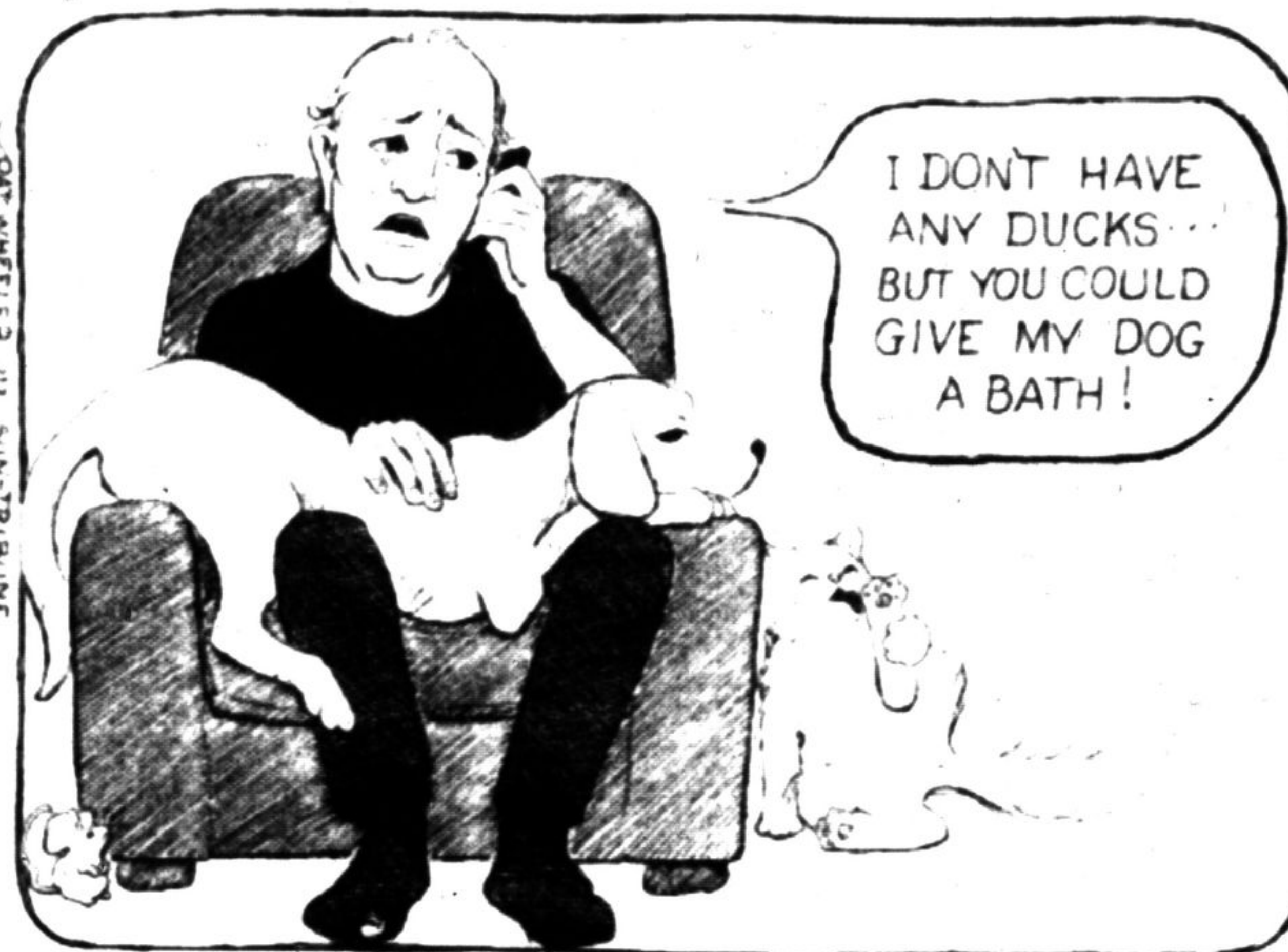
Yet it doesn't begin to meet the demand. Last week, the few shelter beds were quickly filled, leaving volunteers in the terrible position of turning away those in need. And it's a need growing rapidly in tandem with the number of "working poor".

CMHC says one household in eight in York's population of 1.1 million can't afford suitable or adequate housing. The wait for subsidized housing is more than eight years, with about 7,000 in line.

So, thank goodness then, the federal government recognizes the need to continue allocating resources to affordable housing at this critical period.

Initially, the Harper government balked at renewing \$1.6 billion in subsidies provided through mortgages to affordable housing co-operatives, providing homes to 200,000 vulnerable Canadians, including low-income families, seniors and disabled persons, according to Markham MP and Liberal Housing Critic John McCallum. In an about-face Tuesday, in response to a report, the Conservatives allowed "a discounted pre-payment penalty".

When government invests in affordable housing, some of our most at-risk neighbours are given a chance to get back on their feet, live healthy lives and contribute to the economy.



Letters to the Editor

Students should thank teachers for volunteering

Re: Teacher protest takes toll, Jan. 17.

It is regrettable extracurricular activities have become a casualty of the ongoing protest by the province's teachers and the resultant low morale being experienced by many students.

However, students must not assume they are entitled to programming that has been offered in the past as a voluntary service provided by dedicated teachers.

Although understandably disappointed at a lack of their season are members of the Stouffville District Secondary School rugby team battling their coaches, who have spent countless hours volunteering their time and expertise in the past, for their right to play, a right they clearly do not have.

Some members of the rugby team returned for an extra year of high school, not for the quality programming they would be receiving in the classroom, but to play rugby because they believed they had a chance of advancing to OFSAA.

What happened to returning for an extra year of high school to earn the credits necessary to graduate high school and explore other pursuits as a result of academic successes?

Rather than complain about the extracurricular activities that have been lost or postponed, students may want to reflect on the wonderful opportunities they have enjoyed in the past as a result of the countless unselfish hours teachers have committed to a vast array of activities with the understanding that at some point they will return.

Given the public outcry over the

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

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

withdrawal of extracurricular activities, the volunteer work undertaken by teachers must be genuinely valued and those participating should fully appreciate the time and effort of their teachers.

G. YORK
MOUNT ALBERT

Track upgrade welcomed

Re: New court, track upgrade from federal grant money, Jan. 19

On behalf of Julian Franklin and his family, we would like to thank all those who were instrumental in getting the federal government grant to make major improvements to the Franklin-Connell Track, which bears his name, at the Stouffville Arena complex.

We wholeheartedly endorse the upgrading of the track.

FRANCHOT & HOPE FRANKLIN
STOUFFVILLE

You can read letters, columns and stories from The Sun-Tribune on yorkregion.com



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Small-town Bob made huge impact

Bob McNeil wasn't a politician, celebrity or joiner of committees.

He was a small-town electrician most of his adult life. Yet, he somehow affected so many people from so many walks of life.

Call it Bobnation. Lawyer, doctor, fire chief, mayor, clerk, labourer. Everybody knew Bob.

And many of them were out Tuesday to remember the 79-year-old who died last Thursday.

More than 500 overflowed East-Ridge Church's sanctuary to hear stirring tributes from Bob's wife, Sheila, their daughter, Cindy, and ex-NHLer Pete Conacher.

Hockey was a large part of Bob's life. The Timmins native would have a 10-year tour of Europe and Great Britain while playing pro.

His sister, Betty Hitchen, brought the house down recounting the times she forged notes so Bob could skip school and head to the rink.

Brian McFarlane, the venerable former host of Hockey Night in Canada who moved to Stouffville last year, played with Bob on an NHL oldtimers team.

"I'm surprised (Bob) didn't beat cancer into submission with a hockey stick," he wrote from Florida.

He did, a few times. Bob was still fighting cancer for the third time when pneumonia took him down.

From the oldtimers to the kids in Stouffville Clipper coats, including Bob's own grandchildren, the hockey community was out in force. All part of that Bobnation movement.

The story of Bob's life and death was the most read story — 1,750 views and counting — on our website, yorkregion.com, from Friday night through Monday. That's a huge total normally reserved for NHL arena fights and election nights.

I'll miss the weekly visits Bob paid to my office, part of a long tour to check up on friends and share news on his next charity game, a trip with Sheila and his battle with cancer.

Bobnation remembers.
Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.