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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.

Letters to the Editor,
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OPINION

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Editorial

Don't lose momentum, stop bankable sick days

Now that the province has ended the practice of teachers banking sick days and cashing them in at retirement, it's time to do the same for other public sector employees.

For example, many firefighters and York Regional Police employees benefit from bankable sick days.

We understand their members fought for the perk and, no doubt, feel they've earned it, but the reality is we can't afford it.

Budgets are being slashed almost everywhere and there are only so many places to make cuts. This is one of those places. And the best part is the cuts can be made without impacting service levels.

Teachers fought against the move and there's no doubt police officers and firefighters will follow that lead.

Bankable sick days are not the No. 1 prized possession of firefighters, but they're important, Richmond Hill Professional Fire Fighters Association president Greg Horton said.

Bankable sick days actually provides a cost savings because it encourages firefighters to come to work when they're not feeling 100 per cent, thereby avoiding the need to pay overtime to other staffers, he explains.

York Regional Police Association president John Miskiw agrees, noting the policy can help change officers' mindsets, from erring on the side of staying home to one of "toughing it out".

But do we really want emergency services personnel on the job when they're battling a bug?

Every municipal health unit advises people to stay home when they're sick to avoid transmitting whatever they have to co-workers and causing an outbreak.

Not only are police officers and firefighters in contact with co-workers, they also come face-to-face with the public.

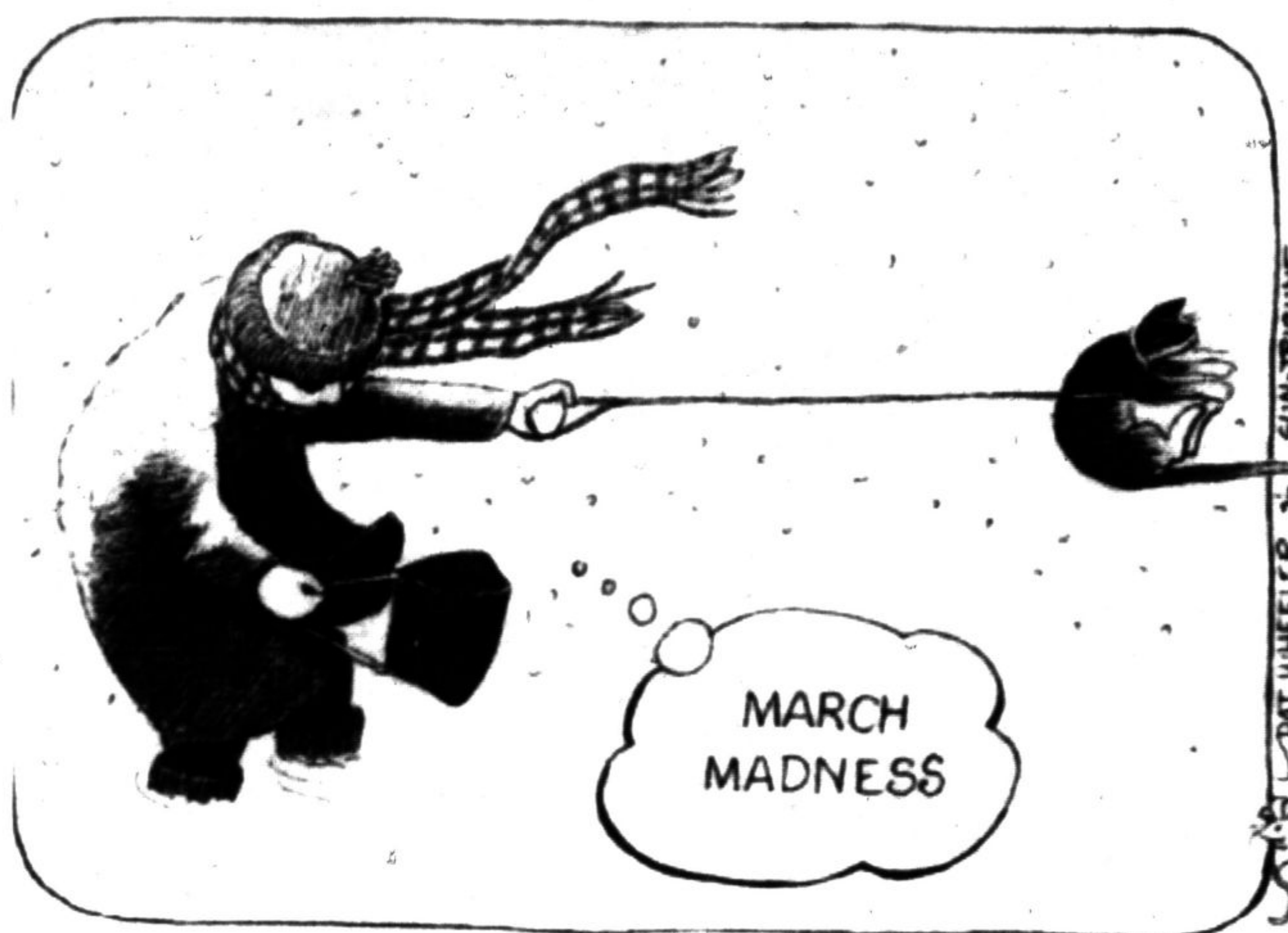
We're not saying take away sick days, but bankable sick days are a perk from better economic times.

And there is a local precedent.

More than 20 years ago, the issue was dealt with in Newmarket, when firefighters had their banked sick days bought out.

And, sure, some will argue the people rallying against bankable sick days are the same people who don't have the perk.

But the issue isn't bankable sick days, it's bankable sick days for public sector workers.



Letters to the Editor

We look out for each other through taxes

Re: Seniors should get break on school taxes, letter to the editor by V. Godfrey.

I disagree with lowering school taxes.

In a social democracy, we all look out for each other and the way we do this is through our taxes.

If we follow the letter writer's logic, then we all should get some sort of reduction on our taxes.

I hardly use the health system, so why should I pay the same amount as others?

I rarely use the 400-series of highways, so should I not expect a reduction in my road taxes?

I was educated in Ontario and am grateful for the excellent public education I received from the taxpayers of this province.

I, too, am retired and I am very happy to have my taxes pay it forward to other young Ontarians.

That's the price I'm willing to pay for a civilized society.

MARIANNE BAHIEDA
NEWMARKET

Pedestrian not always wrong in accidents

Just because the police lay charges against drivers only 32 per cent of the time does not mean pedestrians were at fault 68 per cent of the time.

It means the police are unsure what

happened and do not believe they can lay charges that will stand up in court under the circumstances.

NICK BIRD
RICHMOND HILL

Don't let staff members grade themselves

The region grades itself?

No input is sought from residents?

How relevant is that report card?

What if staff say we are failing? How long will they have their job?

Maybe the high-paid bureaucrats should drive Yonge Street from Davis Drive to Green Lane on a weekend and see how well the traffic flows.

This is one big self-serving report card.

GARY MACDONALD
AURORA

Let van drivers act as buses

Re: Frustrated transit users demand better way, Feb. 23.

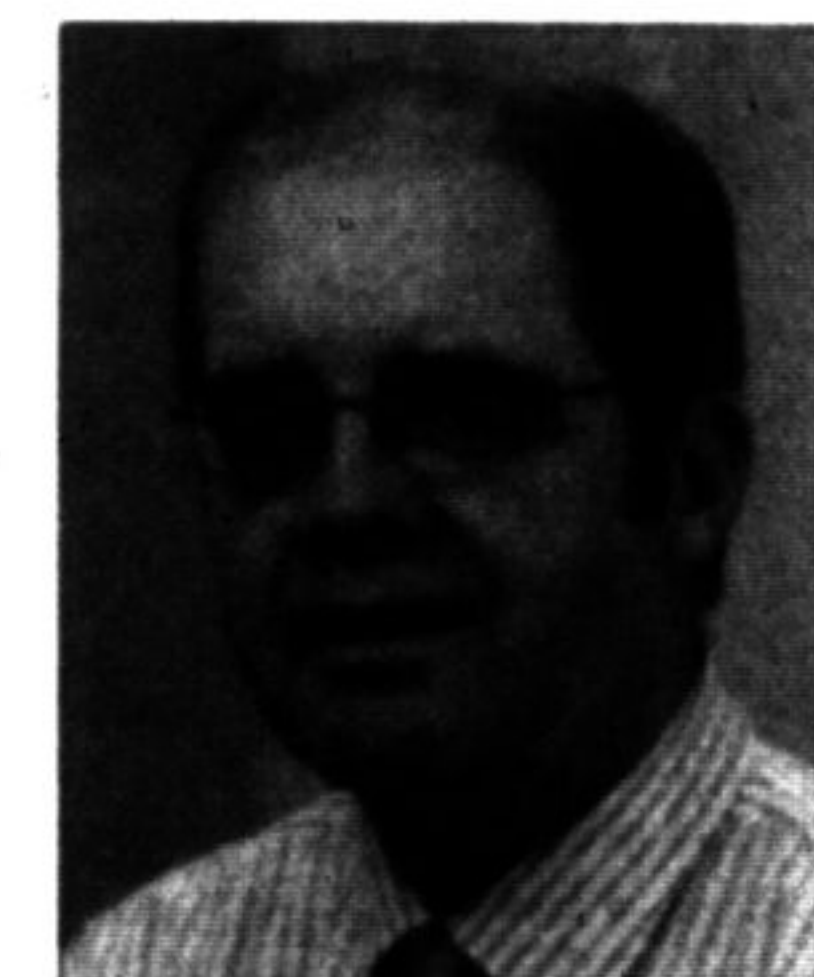
I have been a Richmond Hill resident for many years and originally I am from Lithuania.

The transit problem in Lithuania was resolved by giving licences to ordinary people with vans to drive others.

Passengers are happy and drivers are happy.

It created a lot of full time jobs for people who had minivans.

D. MATELIENE
RICHMOND HILL



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

End of the line for old-time Ontario

In the cult classic *Slap Shot*, one of the minor league hockey players, Johnny Upton, utters the line upon hearing the team might fold.

"...Chrysler plant, here I come," says No. 12 of the Charleston Chiefs in the 1977 flick that's still often played on hockey bus trips and quoted on sports shows.

As fictitious as the story is, that was reality in Ontario of the '70s.

You could land a high-paying union job in a factory without training or experience. Buy a sports car and a starter home and you were set for life. Or so it seemed.

Many a Stouffville resident worked the GM production lines in Oshawa or factories of Scarborough back in that day. They'd commute with their neighbours and relatives.

Now? Not so much. Blame it on that high pay and benefits or whatever, but many of those jobs are toast.

And that high Canadian dollar that looks so good when you're booking the annual junket to Vegas isn't as sweet if you're selling goods south of the border.

A new study showing nearly half of working adults in the GTA have unstable employment without benefits or pensions shouldn't have been that big an eye-opener.

Talk to the soon-to-be out of work crew at Southwire Canada on Main Street.

Look down your own street or inside your family and you're certain to see this so-called "precarious" employment.

Unemployable university grads. Trained teachers stocking shelves at Walmart. Young adults living with their parents longer than either party would prefer.

This insecure work has increased by 50 per cent during the past 20 years across the GTA.

Charlestown was fiction. Our personal rust belt isn't.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.