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Gene Howard Homel

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Résumé de l'article

En 1912, les milieux politiques de Toronto furent divisés par un conflit sur la question de savoir si l'administration municipale devrait permettre l'utilisation de ses glissoires à traîneaux dans les parcs le dimanche. Un mouvement sabbataire influent et bien organisé força la résolution de la question, et alors que les dirigeants syndicaux et les chefs de file du monde des affaires avaient fait campagne pour faire respecter le droit aux loisirs du dimanche, les sabbataires convainquirent le Conseil municipal de fermer les glissoires le jour du Seigneur. L'article examine la persistance des convictions sabbataires et la popularité croissante des attitudes favorables à la sécularisation des loisirs dominicaux.

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Résumé/Abstract

En 1912, les milieux politiques de Toronto furent divisés par un conflit sur la question de savoir si l'administration municipale devrait permettre l'utilisation de ses glissoires à traîneaux dans les parcs le dimanche. Un mouvement sabbataire influent et bien organisé força la résolution de la question, et alors que les dirigeants syndicaux et les chefs de file du monde des affaires avaient fait campagne pour faire respecter le droit aux loisirs du dimanche, les sabbataires convainquirent le Conseil municipal de fermer les glissoires le jour du Seigneur. L'article examine la persistance des convictions sabbataires et la popularité croissante des attitudes favorables à la sécularisation des loisirs dominicaux.

A conflict in Toronto municipal politics in 1912 centred on the question of whether the civic government should allow its toboggan slides in the parks to be used on Sunday. A well-organized and influential sabbatarian movement forced the issue, and while labour and business leaders mobilized to protect Sunday recreation, the sabbatarians convinced City Council to close the slides on the Lord's Day. This article examines the persistence of sabbatarian belief as well as the increase of sentiment favourable to a more secularized view of Sunday recreation.

Long months of cold and stormy weather often made winter in Toronto unpleasant and tiresome. But there were some consolations. "It is probable," declared an author on winter sports, "that at all times and in all places the sight of snow has excited in the mind of man a desire to cross its surface, and has stimulated his inventive powers to discover some contrivance which may enable him to do so with least trouble and most comfort to himself."¹ Sunday afternoons brought thousands of city residents into public parks to enjoy the pleasures of skating and tobogganing. However, in January 1912, one of these pastimes, tobogganing, was about to be curtailed. A powerful coalition containing the Lord's Day Alliance, Protestant clergymen, and zealous laymen launched a campaign to close city-operated toboggan slides in the parks on Sunday. Allowing the slides to remain open on the Lord's Day, the sabbatarians claimed, simply encouraged the desecration of the Sabbath, and would lead to further inroads on Toronto's Sunday observance. The question of whether public toboggan slides should be used on Sunday rapidly snowballed into a bitter mid-winter controversy, revealing the deep division of opinion regarding public activities on the Lord's Day. An examination of the 1912 Sunday slides incident demonstrates the hegemony of sabbatarianism, as well as the developing forces of secularization in urban Canada during this period.

While most cities in the Dominion enforced Sunday regulations of a varying degree of severity, many Torontonians took a particular pride in the purity of their Sunday life. This pride did not go unchallenged. As Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles have shown in *Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, Sunday observance was a vola-

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tile issue in Toronto, one which highlighted growing social tensions.² The question was far from resolved in 1897 in favour of the open Sunday when a plebiscite finally approved the operation of Sunday streetcar service. Instead, the following decade demonstrated that the sabbatarian forces were strong and effectively organized. In 1906, Ottawa passed the Lord's Day Act to curtail more completely Sunday activities which were non-essential or non-charitable.³ The Lord's Day Act and the militant Alliance greatly reduced commercial recreation on Sunday, especially with regard to transportation. In 1906, when the Act had been passed, there were in Canada some 500 pleasure excursions operating on Sunday. The following year, the total dropped to less than fifty, and in 1908 there were only half a dozen by the end of the summer.⁴ The LDA executive continued to insist that its object was not to coerce Canadians into church, but to maintain a weekly day of rest for workingmen.⁵

Long before the sabbatarian offensive in early 1912, tobogganing had been a notably popular pastime in Toronto's snow-covered parks. It was even claimed that the sport was invented in Canada, where it had long been "one of the chief amusements."⁶ Some of it was under private auspices, such as the Riverside Toboggan Club. Visiting the Riverside slide in 1888, J.J. Kelso, the newspaperman and nascent social reformer, found some twenty young people mingling in "great zest;" the girls, he noted appreciatively, were uninhibitedly friendly. Although it "made me shudder," Kelso "gripped tight, held my breath to keep in my heart and in a moment the level valley of the Don was reached, over 200 yards away."⁷ Tobogganing was also enjoyed on the slopes of massive High



One of the Chief Amusements

High Park. Toboggan Run and Spectators, c. 1909.

SOURCE: James Collection, City of Toronto Archives.

Park. Save for a road and a few planted trees, the west-end park in the 1890s resembled a pristine wilderness.⁸

The bustling growth of Toronto's population in the first decade of the twentieth century focused attention on the inadequacies of city-park facilities. The increasing popularity of tobogganing had resulted in overcrowded and unsafe hills and a number of accidental injuries. As well, the parks had done little to accommodate the enthusiasm for the sport. In December, 1907, thousands of children from downtown neighbourhoods were forced to use the slopes just west of the legislative building as a toboggan slide. The University of Toronto ordered them to leave. Kelso, by now Ontario's most famous child-saver, spoke for urban reformers when he suggested that a playground association could help to provide "rational amusement" and healthy outdoor recreation for these children. City parks should provide free and improved skating and tobogganing facilities.⁹

The greater numbers of tobogganists forced the civic government to intervene. During the winter of 1909, some sliders using the hills in High Park had been victimized by barbed wire and collisions. In comparison with other cities, the *Star* charged, Toronto had done little to safeguard tobogganists. "Considering the thousands who daily use the slides, the city could well afford" safety improvements.¹⁰ If nothing was done, some unfortunate "will be taken home a corpse," and an end would come to "one of the most enjoyable pleasures imaginable, and one that has only a modicum of danger attached when the necessary precautions are taken." The *Star* recommended the establishment of police patrols and safety ropes, and the removal of barbed wire.¹¹ In response to the need for regulation, safety, and improved recreation, the civic government obligingly assumed a greater responsibility for slides in its parks; they were upgraded and police were assigned to them. Toronto now had a fancy new system of public tobogganing, and its residents flocked to the slides seven days a week.

But the use of the slides on Sunday was not to continue in the face of the sabbatarian movement, which was fighting the remaining commercial and recreational activities on the Lord's Day. The fact that sliding was permitted by the government in its parks on Sunday ensured that sliding would become an issue in civic politics. Early in January, 1912, the Ministerial Association issued a sharp condemnation of Sunday use of the High Park slopes.¹² Throughout the remainder of the month and into early February, numerous church groups and moral-reform bodies peppered City Council with resolutions and petitions.¹³

The sabbatarians were part of a formidable moral-reform coalition with political clout, and with a well-established presence in Toronto politics.¹⁴ They were provided with aggressive leadership from the Presbyterian Rev.

W.H. Rochester, the current general secretary of the LDA; Rev. T.A. Moore, the ardent Methodist moral reformer; and Rev. J.G. Shearer, a Presbyterian and founder and former general secretary for the LDA.¹⁵ Numerous other clergymen acted as spokesmen for sabbatarian principles. Overlapping the LDA in personnel and influence were the Moral and Social Reform Council and a number of temperance groups, such as the WCTU. Finally, a network of church organizations in which the Methodists were the most prominent denomination provided a strong grassroots basis for moral-reform campaigns, from the youth groups of the large congregations all the way down to such bodies as the "Catch My Pal Total Abstinence Union, Cook's Church Branch."¹⁶ Nor were Sabbath guardians and other moral reformers reluctant to engage in lobbying and electoral action to win their demands. They frequently campaigned for civic politicians friendly to themselves, and on occasion even endorsed certain candidates, who apparently owed their election at least in part to such backing.¹⁷ While civic politicians had to satisfy a multiplicity of interests, one of the stronger ones was moral reform, often on the minds of politicians because of such council issues as the restriction of liquor licences.

The sabbatarians opposed Sunday tobogganing on traditional religious grounds, and on the basis that Canada had to be maintained as a truly Christian commonwealth.¹⁸ In the immediate context, by allowing the park slides to be used on Sunday, the government itself was in effect encouraging Sabbath desecration. According to Rev. Rochester, "the city is secularizing the day and the city enters into direct competition with the church, the Sunday school and the home."¹⁹ Governments had to enforce overarching moral values that tied together the various classes comprising the city. Moreover, Sunday sliding could be but the thin edge of an open Sunday. "The line must be drawn somewhere, or it might lead to the opening up of Sunday under city auspices."²⁰ In the broader context, the forces of industrial and urban modernization had been intensifying sabbatarian anxieties. City growth, immigration, and industrial expansion appeared to threaten cherished moral standards and even the material strength and spiritual authority of Protestant churches. Newer and larger industries demanded continuous operations throughout the week,²¹ and industrial employees demanded greater recreational opportunities on the Lord's Day. These violations worsened as more and more capital and labour originated from outside the country. Sabbatarians suspected that newcomers, especially immigrants, appeared to be less than devoted to Sabbath sanctity. For LDA leaders, non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, Yankee branch-plant operators, and "sporting people" were essentially outsiders whose Sunday habits had to be curbed. Canada required protection, wrote Rev. Moore, "from being degraded by the vicious practices of foreigners who are anything but friends of Canada and seem to despise our institutions, our laws, and our government."²² In a threatened Lord's Day, the alarmed moral-reform ranks found

an essential context in which to voice their unease and reassert their beleaguered authority.

At first Mayor Geary and the Board of Control took no action regarding the ministerial resolution of early January and, lured by clerical publicity, large crowds turned out at the High Park and Riverdale toboggan slides.²³ However, the Sunday slides issue was rapidly brought to a head when City Council received a barrage of sabbatarian petitions, and when two deputations appeared before the Board of Control on 16 January, Rev. Rochester and a group of supporters insistently demanded the closing of city slides on Sunday. Another delegation, led by J.G. O'Donoghue, prominent labour leader, lawyer, and son of the late D.J. O'Donoghue, pioneer unionist and sabbatarian, opposed the clerics and favoured the *status quo*. One gentleman dissented from these views by arguing to Rochester that "The Lord made the slides in Riverdale. Can't we go there and slide down on them and praise God?" Toronto "clericalism" reminded him of Quebec or France. The Board of Control decided to seek a report from the City Solicitor.²⁴ After the Solicitor informed the Board that it had the power to regulate the slides, Controller McCarthy, a Methodist allied with urban-reform causes, moved that a by-law be introduced prohibiting the use of park slides on Sunday. The Board backed McCarthy, voting three to one for his motion. McCarthy also wanted another by-law establishing a fixed time to close the slides during the week, suggesting that 10:30 p.m. would be best. Mayor Geary, who had opposed McCarthy's motion, countered that sliding was not dangerous after 10:30 on a moonlit night; he himself would do it under such optimal conditions. No further action was taken on a closing time, but shortly thereafter City Council upheld the Controllers, approving the by-law on initial reading by an 18 to 15 tally.²⁵ The fight was on.

The sabbatarian campaign and council's action stirred a number of Toronto groups to defend Sunday tobogganing in vigorous terms. One of these groups consisted of trade-union leaders. Labour was clearly infuriated, and its breach with the Lord's Day coalition widened. Relations between the two had been tense for some time. Some union leaders had once provided a modicum of support for sabbatarianism, less from piety than from a calculated understanding that the LDA's work might prevent "seven-day-in-the-week slavery"²⁶ and might tend to shorten working hours on Saturday. In the 1880s and 1890s D.J. O'Donoghue had been one of the founders and constant friends of the Alliance.²⁷ However, the sabbatarian sword cut two ways, for Sunday recreational activities, an important part of working-class life, were equally a target of LDA enthusiasm. During the lengthy Sunday streetcar debate of the 1890s, organized labour steadily defected from sabbatarian ranks, convinced of the benefits of Sunday mobility and of the minimal risk of increased work-hours.²⁸ By the 1897 streetcar plebiscite, most prominent labour men favoured Sunday cars, as did a resolution of the

Labor Council. But a number of unionists such as O'Donoghue and S.R. Heakes did fight with equal verve against them. James Simpson, a young printer, Methodist youth leader, and lay preacher, delivered a dramatic diatribe against both labour and middle-class advocates of Sunday cars.²⁹

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the bonds of sympathy and support that had existed between some of the old-guard labour leaders and the LDA were weakened or practically dissolved. As class lines and industrial conflict sharpened, moral-reform sentiments waned within the labour movement, precluding continued co-operation with churchmen, and producing a bitter labour critique of middle-class churches and moral reformers. It is true that the Trades and Labor Congress during the early years of the century endorsed the LDA and that a joint LDA-Toronto Labor Council committee and platform were established, but the TLC was hardly interested in action beyond annual perfunctory resolutions, and the joint committee accomplished practically nothing. Labour men were uncomfortable with sabbatarian clergymen, sceptical as to their sincerity or effectiveness in reducing total work-hours throughout the week, and unimpressed by the spectre of Sunday toil, especially after the passage of the 1906 Act. Furthermore, the working-class demand for Sunday recreation clashed with the LDA's desire for restrictions, which appeared to be ignorant of, or hostile to, labour's needs. At one point the Alliance tried to dissuade unions from scheduling excursions and picnics on Sunday. In response to an LDA dictum that political meetings on Sunday were illegal, independent labour party supporters voted to continue Sunday meetings, as the only time they could gather to discuss reform. The attitude of most workingmen towards the LDA was probably typified by the St. Thomas, Ontario, Labor Council, which condemned the LDA for "denying [workers] the right of obtaining God's fresh air on the Sabbath" by closing the railway to lakeside recreational spots.³⁰

The major argument marshalled by labour men against the proposed ban on Sunday tobogganing was that it would be completely unfair and harmful, since Sunday was virtually the only day in which working people could use the slides and benefit from much-needed recreation. J.G. O'Donoghue's deputation to City Hall had stressed that workers were entitled to Sunday sliding since, on the remaining days of the week, "they leave home at seven in the morning and do not get back until it is dark." Fred Bancroft, H.B. Woodrow, L.H. Gibbins and other trade-union worthies emphasized that the ban would discriminate against the working class. James Simpson, who by 1912 was perhaps Canada's best-known and most-effective labour leader, explained that tobogganing was "the most helpful recreation to the young people." "Many are working six days a week, and Sunday is the only day they have to enjoy themselves."³¹ The Metal Trades Council criticized those clerics who "are trying to make Toronto's



Worshipping in the Open Air

High Park. Line-ups waiting for turn on toboggan runs, c. 1909.

SOURCE: James Collection, City of Toronto Archives.

'Blue' Sunday a shade bluer."³²

When the city Labor Council met on 18 January, tempers were already at a boiling point. Delegates charged that the LDA desire to restrict Sunday labour was irrelevant in this case; Sunday sliding forced no one to toil except policemen, who had to work Sunday in any case. More importantly, the LDA was hypocritically trying to curtail those who could not afford an auto for Sunday outings but could beg, borrow, or buy a toboggan. If the Alliance was fair-minded, it would oppose the wealthy who desecrated the Sabbath by making their chauffeurs work. Council passed a resolution terming the city move "an infringement on the rights of those who, working through the week, have no other opportunity of recuperating from the effects of confinement in factories, workshops, stores, etc." It was "an inherent right of the people to spend Sunday as they please." City clerics, one delegate added, were "degenerating into the business agents of the manufacturers of this country."³³

Trade unionists wasted little time in making their feelings known. The Labor Council, the machinists' and patternmakers' unions, and other labour bodies forwarded protest resolutions to City Council,³⁴ and the officials of several additional unions fumed to a largely sympathetic daily press that the by-law was discriminatory. Men and women "can worship in the open air or anywhere, as well as inside the four walls of a church," L.H. Gibbins avowed.³⁵ H.B. Woodrow, a leading independent labourite, even denied the traditional LDA claim that it had reduced hours of toil. The Alliance "has never done a thing to lesson [sic] the working man's hours per day on week days," and did not care if work was done twenty-four hours a day, as long as it was not performed on Sunday.³⁶ Woodrow's labour party resolved against any Sunday sliding ban,³⁷ and a radical, Phillips Thompson, who had been an active supporter of Sunday streetcars in the 1890s, asked his fellow citizens to oppose "a few noisy fanatics... of this priest and parson-ridden city."³⁸

More remarkable than union agitation was the barrage of simple but eloquent letters to the newspapers, which were frequently signed by a self-proclaimed "working man" or "working girl." If Lord's Day advocates "were confined to offices and factories year in and year out, with probably two weeks' holiday out of 52, and unfortunately 90 per cent of our class do not get this, they would raise the red flag of rebellion against what they would deem arbitrary laws." Sabbatarian saints had "just enough religion to miss all the fun in this world and get a lot of painful surprises in the next."³⁹ They could not possibly understand the workers' plight, as they take holidays "where their wives and children run round half naked on the bathing beaches on Sunday afternoon while the band plays."⁴⁰ If the Board of Control was just, asserted one commentator, it would pass laws to shut factories on Saturday afternoon and to enforce eight-hour days. In the ab-

sence of such laws, workers required Sunday recreation.⁴¹ One writer even argued that Jesus Christ Himself would uphold Sunday sliding.⁴² Toronto's "class of hard working citizens" was denied Saturday half-holidays; by the time it left work and arrived home, there was no chance for outdoor activities.⁴³

Labour was far from alone in its support for Sunday tobogganing. Several Toronto newspapers and journals backed the chorus of protest. The *World*, long an infamous foe of the sabbatarians, charged that the LDA simply wanted "the restriction of the liberties of the common people." It would have the police remove all residents from public places on Sunday "except those rich enough to own automobiles and subscribe largely to church funds."⁴⁴ The *News* rejected the notion that Sunday tobogganing was sinful. It caused no nuisance or extra toil, and the LDA gave the impression "that instead of being a Workmen's Protection Society it was a sectarian committee of bigoted Sabbatarians."⁴⁵ The *Star* was more incisive, reminding its readers that the slides were erected to make tobogganing safer and to prevent accidents on the unimproved hillsides. If the slides were closed on Sunday, encouraging people to use the natural slopes, accidents would once again occur, thus demonstrating "the folly of making an amusement dangerous, while not preventing it."⁴⁶ The satirical magazine *Jack Canuck* wondered why clergymen opposed Sunday tobogganing, for without sliding they would be put out of business. Church pews "are filled every Sunday with sliders, back sliders, and front sliders, and side sliders, and slippers, and skidders, and skaters, galore. It is for them that the church bells ring; it is for them that [the clergy] preach the gospel; it is for them that the verger dusts the seats and fires up the furnace."⁴⁷ Jack Canuck met a visitor to "Ye Village of Toronto" who was "surprised that people are allowed to inhale fresh air on Sunday, instead of stocking it up on Saturday."⁴⁸

Probably the most influential group favouring Sunday sliding was the large contingent of businessmen which entered the controversy. By the 1897 streetcar vote, some businessmen had become vehemently opposed to the sabbatarians. Their Citizens' Sunday Car Association had argued that "the changed conditions of modern life" necessitated an expanded system of urban transport and that Sunday service might lessen class tension by giving the poor some of the advantages possessed by the wealthy.⁴⁹ By 1912, it was even more obvious that the sizeable and crowded working-class population required better Sunday recreational opportunities. At the time of the slides debate, Toronto businessmen were actively promoting reformed housing and street-railway policies, designed to produce a more efficient labour force.⁵⁰ Contented employees also needed better leisure-time facilities. Moreover, impressed with the bitterness of the labour assault against the allegedly hypocritical and slothful sabbatarians, businessmen reasoned that a law which greatly

heightened class antagonisms over Sunday tobogganing was a stupid law indeed. By backing what appeared to be a popular and outraged protest, businessmen could perhaps satisfy some of their employees that capital actually sympathized with labour.

Saturday Night magazine, which had given strong backing to Sunday cars under E.E. Sheppard, helped to establish a businessmen's "Citizens' Committee" for Sunday sliding. The journal asked the LDA to listen to workingmen and store clerks if it wished to discover why half the city's residents "never darken a church door."⁵¹ Harold Gagnier, the president of *Saturday Night*, told the press that his Citizens' Committee had launched a petition campaign backed by fifty prominent businessmen, and Frank Strathy, manager of the Traders' Bank, added that the legislated ban would create ill-feeling towards the church.⁵² The following day the newspapers printed the business petition. Sunday tobogganing, the statement proclaimed, "is in no way detrimental to either the religion or morals of the people, and any attempt to withdraw this liberty may result in a loss of respect for both law and religion, and is withal not in the best interests of the community." The by-law was discriminatory "class legislation"; those "who have not the means to make use of the private clubs and more expensive forms of Sunday outing" would be denied healthful recreation at a time when it was acknowledged as "the one great and vital necessity of the public." The petition was appended with the names of Gagnier, Strathy, George Gooderham, and many other manufacturers, managers, and financiers. Those who wished to support the petition were asked to return a coupon to *Saturday Night's* headquarters.⁵³ In due course Gagnier presented the petition, graced by 15,000 names, to a City Council meeting.⁵⁴

Besides tobogganing and skating, one of Toronto's favourite forms of recreation was the mass meeting. The backers of Sunday sliding quickly planned a rally at Massey Hall. While trade unionists publicized the event and asked for a strong labour turnout,⁵⁵ the rally bore the imprint of its business organizers. *Saturday Night's* C.H. Ashley seconded the meeting's resolution for Sunday sliding and served as its secretary. A man of property and prestige, J.S. Willison, editor of the *Toronto News*, chaired the meeting.

The Massey Hall rally was a spirited occasion. Addressing the predominantly youthful and working-class audience, speaker after speaker attacked the proposed by-law as the height of foolishness, while generally agreeing with Willison that they did not desire a sacrilegious Sabbath. "Fresh air," Willison grandly told the crowd, "should not be the subject of any prohibitory enactment." Businessman and city developer R. Home Smith declared that a blue Sunday would drive citizens to the other extreme. C.H. Ashley, pointing to YMCA boys in the audience,

proclaimed that they were no less Christian for wanting Sunday recreation. Millionaire stockbroker Edmund Osler, in an open letter to the rally, suggested that clergymen should join their young charges on the Sunday slides. Flora Macdonald Denison and Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen, reformers and feminists, demanded more healthful recreation for the city.

Jimmy Simpson, a product of fervent Methodism and once a staunch advocate of Sunday restrictions, delivered the most biting speech. If the city banned Sunday tobogganing, he argued, its Lord's Day fervour could extend to stopping the streetcars and closing the boulevards. The Riverdale Zoo was supposed to be a Sunday attraction. Why didn't the anti-sliding aldermen call for the Zoo's closure on Sunday? Better still, "they should have the animals in the Zoo join the Lord's Day Alliance and refuse to work on Sunday." A recent Methodist conference had decided to leave to its members' personal discretion such matters as dancing and the theatre. This was the proper way to approach the slides question. In any case it was "gross injustice that young men and young women who worked six days of the week from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. should be deprived of the chance of a little recreation on Sunday."

A vital and lively city could not be built on petty restrictions. "Go to London, England," Simpson exclaimed, "and there you will find in Hyde Park roads for the aristocracy enjoying their Sunday morning ride, military bands discoursing for the delectation of the multitude, whilst groups of people gathered around speakers expounding on all sorts of subjects." He reminded his audience that originally the slides were nothing more than natural hills that resembled obstacle courses. Then the civic government had intervened to prevent accidents. If the by-law was passed, sliders would again use unimproved hills on Sunday, and accidents would occur as they had before government action. The measure was thus a backward step which would reduce order and regulation so necessary in the city. Simpson closed his speech with a personal poke at an anti-sliding alderman. "It might as well be contended that drug shops should be closed, but then, of course, we had druggists on the Council – Sunday sliding should be preferred to Sunday drugging. The one with its healthy exercise would prevent the disease which the other was open to cure."⁵⁶

Sabbatarians and civic politicians remained unmoved by the rally. An undaunted LDA asserted that the speeches "were all wide of the issue," and the Methodist *Christian Guardian* belittled the argument that the poor "over-worked and under-amused people" could exercise only on Sunday.⁵⁷ Moral reform forces had no cause for alarm; Councilmen opposed to Sunday sliding were not converted by the Massey Hall event.⁵⁸ On February 5th, City Council passed the by-law amendment on second reading by a comfortable margin when a motion by Alder-

man McBride to hold a plebiscite on the question was defeated by a 17 to 8 vote. Considerable discussion preceded the count. Controller Hocken proclaimed himself a friend of the workingman, despite his sabbatarian stance. Sunday restrictions would increase Saturday half-holidays. An opposing alderman warned that if accidents occurred after the slides were closed, the LDA would be held responsible. A couple of aldermen bitterly criticized Simpson's speech. Alderman Rowland, the druggist, suggested that Simpson be locked up in Riverdale Zoo for his remark that the animals join the LDA. The piqued politician lamely explained that he kept his drug store open on Sunday because "the other fellows did it." Alderman Yeomans claimed that Simpson "was at one time a representative of labor... before he secured a good Government appointment which enabled him to travel around in a private car with a valet to wait on him in an aristocratic manner."⁵⁹

Sunday sliding was greatly chilled several days later, when Toronto temperatures plunged to extremely low temperatures, inspiring one *Star* reader to terrible poetry:

Coldest weather in seventeen years?
 Can we really believe our ears?
 One would think it was July,
 To hear the Sunday sliders cry
 About the need of free, fresh air
 Which only circulates out where
 The swift toboggan glides away,
 And only there on the Sabbath day.
 Perhaps these poor young fellows' lungs,
 And inner tubes and throats and tongues
 Are so constructed that they must
 Get air in this queer way, or bust,
 Then send them down with parting prayer;
 Stand back! I say, and give them air.⁶⁰

Few LDAers were willing to be this tolerant.

Finally, on February 19th, "the axe fell quietly and quickly; and the youthful Canadian who next Sunday ventures to disport himself on any of the civic slides should arrange for bail beforehand."⁶¹ The by-law was passed easily on third reading, with only seven Council members, including Mayor Geary, opposed. Henceforth, according to the law, "No person shall on the Sabbath in any public park, square, garden or place for exhibition in the City, slide upon or use any of the public slides constructed or maintained by the Corporation."⁶² Notwithstanding the LDA's concern that policemen had to work on the Sabbath, constables were posted at the slides on Sunday to prevent their use.⁶³ In the autumn of 1912, Alderman McBride attempted to convince City Council to submit the question to a referendum, but his resolutions were soundly defeated.⁶⁴ Ironically, after the passage of the by-law, Sunday tobogganists simply moved from the slides to the frozen ponds in city parks. Thousands of residents on a wintry Sunday scampered across the ice of High Park's Grenadier Pond – with or without skates – "just as gaily as

they went tobogganing."⁶⁵ There seemed to be no way to suppress the desire for outdoor recreation on Sunday.

During the years following the 1912 by-law, the edict against Sunday tobogganing in the parks continued to be enforced, though it is likely that sliding was done outside the parks. The use of the parks on Sunday was discouraged. However, in the summer of 1938 city politicians and parks officials decided to dilute Sabbath restrictions by permitting unorganized and personal recreation between the hours of 1 and 6 p.m. of the sort that citizens would enjoy "in their own back yards on Sunday." All organized games and team activities, as well as hockey and tobogganing, were still banned on the Lord's Day. "Anything that leads in the direction of a wide open Sunday in Toronto," the *Telegram* proclaimed in 1939, "must be resisted." In the 1940s and 1950s the park slides were gradually phased out of existence, yet the by-law against Sunday sliding remained on the books until December, 1961.⁶⁶

The Sunday tobogganing controversy of 1912 indicated that sabbatarian sentiment was relatively powerful and well-organized. Most Toronto politicians were understandably reluctant to spurn the appeals of moral reformers. The by-law ban constituted a victory for sabbatarianism, which largely maintained Sabbath restrictions in Toronto well into the post-1945 period, particularly with regard to commercialized recreation.⁶⁷ Far from being imposed by a few clerical cranks, sabbatarian regulations were protected by a network of church groups and moral-reform associations. These groups were deeply concerned about the maintenance of a moral community, which they felt was threatened by the industrial city. Nor was sabbatarianism merely a negative and repressive reaction. Its ideology was based on the argument that in a "Christian society" every worker must have one day of rest in seven, normally on Sunday,⁶⁸ and that this rest offered each person the opportunity to transcend material pursuits in favour of the cultivation of moral and spiritual qualities. It is significant that Controller McCarthy, who introduced the by-law, was considered a progressive urban reformer.⁶⁹

The controversy also revealed that emergent convictions less favourable to Sabbath purity were becoming strengthened since the 1890s. In 1912, while opponents of sabbatarianism did not have one powerful corporate backer which they had had in the 1890s in the form of the Street Railway Company, they were much more numerous, vocal and influential than ever before. These adversaries did not correspond to the LDA's image of alien Sabbath desecraters. They were uniformly Anglo-Saxon and respectable, as were the actual Sunday sliders themselves.⁷⁰ Behind the opposition to the by-law lay a hostility, not to religious observances, but to the ban on a non-commercial pastime. Sabbatarians had stated that "the Lord's Day Act does not 'make it a crime to fish or indulge in what most people regard as comparatively innocent amusement on Sunday'." "Only the business of fishing,

and the business of amusement is prohibited by the Lord's Day Act."⁷¹ For Sunday sliders and their defenders, tobogganing was an innocent non-commercial activity.

Much of the support for Sunday recreation came from businessmen, who were increasingly hostile to many Sunday restrictions. In the 1890s John Charlton, Liberal M.P. and sabbatarian leader, had been able to claim in the House of Commons that "it is the uniform testimony of employers of labour, that the efficient labourer, the happy, clean, self-respecting labourer, is the man who stays at home on Sunday, goes to church and Sunday School, and comes up to his work on Monday morning fresh and alert and ready to grapple with his duties."⁷² By 1912, the lengthy list of businessmen who signed the pro-Sunday slides petition was eloquent testimony to the defection from sabbatarianism. Many of the new men of power and prestige were convinced that advancing industrialism required a lessening of class tensions and an enhancement of their workers' sense of social contentment, which would presumably increase labour efficiency. Furthermore, recreational expansion had become for urban reformers a matter of public health and civic boosterism. Dr. C.J. Hastings, the Medical Officer of Health, advocated Sunday sliding.⁷³ Mayor H.C. Hocken in 1914 placed sports accommodations high on his list of Toronto reform achievements in the preceding five years.⁷⁴

Like businessmen, labour officials and their followers launched sharper and more unified attacks on the sabbatarian forces. Since the early years of the century, both James Simpson and J.G. O'Donoghue, former LDA officers,⁷⁵ had deserted the Alliance. Along with LDA opposition to Sunday recreation, the diminished prospect of Sab-

bath toil, and the hardening of class lines between workers and middle-class moralists, the tobogganing controversy further intensified labour anger at Protestant churchmen. Toilers charged that sabbatarians could not or would not comprehend that the realities of working-class life necessitated leisure activities on Sunday, which should be left to the individual to decide. Labour and business pursued a common demand for Sunday recreation independently of each other and guided by contradictory motives and goals. As anti-paternalist workingmen pointed out in 1897 and 1912, businessmen were largely concerned with producing a more useful work force. "Don't you see through all this agitation to keep open these slides," a self-proclaimed "toiler" wrote the *News* in opposition to Sunday tobogganing, "that some employers of labor are backing it, in order that they can make you work more hours every week?"⁷⁶

The growth of industrial cities posed a problem for religion, whose legitimacy, as sociologist Max Weber noted, was breaking upon the rationalized and impersonal characteristics of industrialism. The church, Weber wrote in 1915, had "watched with profound suspicion the deployment of economic forces" contradicting religious values and assumptions, and had not been able to "overcome the tension between [its] religiosity and a rational economy." Politics was becoming directed by "the rational rules of the state order."⁷⁷ It was clear that, faced with the development of modern industrial cities, churchmen attempted to reassert their authority, while those classes closest to economic and political rationalization – labour and the managers of business and the state – resisted those traditional religious restraints which contradicted their own interests. Toronto sabbatarians had won the fight in 1912, but they did not have time on their side.

NOTES

1. Ormond Hake, "Tobogganing," in J.M. Heathcote and C.G. Tebbutt, *Skating* (London, 1894), p.389.
2. Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897* (Toronto, 1977). On the background of the sabbatarian movement, see pp.49-52.
3. For a review of sabbatarian legislation see Ontario Law Reform Commission, *Report on Sunday Observance Legislation* (Toronto, 1970). On the Lord's Day Act, see A.C.M. Waterman, "The Lord's Day in a Secular Society: A Historical Comment on the Canadian Lord's Day Act of 1906," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, XI, 2 (1965); G.N. Emery, "The Lord's Day Act of 1906 and the Sabbath Observance Question," in J.M. Bumsted, ed., *Documentary Problems in Canadian History*, Vol. II (Georgetown, Ontario, 1969). The development of sabbatarianism in Toronto is discussed by J.R. Burnet in "The Urban Community and Changing Moral Standards," in S.D. Clark, ed., *Urbanism and the Changing Canadian Society* (Toronto, 1961).
4. *Globe*, 5 September 1908, p. 14. All names of Toronto newspapers are cited in shortened form.
5. *Star*, 1 December 1911, p. 2. The LDA proudly claimed that it had won a weekly day of rest for up to 125,000 Canadian workers through the 1906 Act and was actively increasing that number. University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, Lord's

- Day Alliance of Canada papers (hereafter LDA papers), Rev. W.H. Rochester to G.A. Lamont, 1 February 1912.
6. Hake, "Tobogganing," p.390.
7. Public Archives of Canada, J.J. Kelso papers, Vol. I, Kelso Diary, 1885-1891, 10 January 1888.
8. Public Archives of Canada, W.C. Good papers, Vol. I, Good to Louie, 2 May 1897.
9. Kelso papers, Vol. 15, playgrounds scrapbook, cuttings, *News*, 2 January 1908; unidentified cutting, 1907.
10. *Star*, 16 January 1909, p. 16.
11. *Ibid.*, 18 January 1909, p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*, 8 January 1912, p. 1.
13. *Ibid.*, 22 January 1912, p. 1; *Ibid.*, 29 January 1912, p. 8; *Globe*, 29 January 1912, p. 9; Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1912 (Toronto, 1913), 5 February 1912, pp.48-52.
14. For the 1880s, see Desmond Morton, *Mayor Howland: The Citizens' Candidate* (Toronto, 1973).
15. For more on Rochester, Moore and Shearer, see Henry James Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1912); and Richard Allen, *The Social Passion* (Toronto, 1973), chapter 2.
16. See footnote 13.
17. For one example in which temperance and moral-reform forces based in the churches endorsed and campaigned for a slate in the

- 1905 civic election, see Gene Howard Homel, "James Simpson and the Origins of Canadian Social Democracy," Ph.D. thesis (University of Toronto, 1978), pp.218-20.
18. For an excellent summary of traditional sabbatarian arguments, see John Charlton, *Speeches and Addresses: Political, Literary and Religious* (Toronto, 1905), pp.253-89.
 19. *Globe*, 17 January 1912, p.9.
 20. *Star*, 23 January 1912, p.12.
 21. LDA papers, Rev. T.A. Moore to Premier Whitney, 19 May 1905.
 22. *Ibid.*; Rev. J.G. Shearer to the Bay of Quinte Methodist Conference, 2 June 1902; Rev. T.A. Moore to Ontario Attorney-General J.J. Foy, 1 February 1906; *Star*, 12 January 1911, p.1.
 23. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *World*, 15 January 1912.
 24. *Ibid.*, *World*, 17 January 1912; *Globe*, 17 January 1912, p.9.
 25. LDA papers, scrapbooks, various cuttings; *News*, 19 January 1912, p.1; *Star*, 23 January 1912, p.12.
 26. LDA papers, Rev. J.G. Shearer to P.M. Draper, 24 August 1906.
 27. *Ibid.*, scrapbooks, *Mail and Empire*, 22 October 1898; *Globe*, 11 November 1899; *Ibid.*, Rev. J.G. Shearer to D.J. O'Donoghue, 10 November 1906; *The Lord's Day Advocate*, Vol. 4, No. 2, February 1907.
 28. Armstrong and Nelles, *Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, pp.61-63, 106-107, 113, 177.
 29. Homel, "James Simpson and the Origins of Canadian Social Democracy," pp.34-41.
 30. *Ibid.*, pp.276-83.
 31. LDA papers, scrapbooks, various cuttings.
 32. *Ibid.*, unidentified cutting, n.d.
 33. *Ibid.*, *News*, 19 January 1912, Public Archives of Canada, Toronto Trades and Labor Council Minutebooks, minutebook 1911-1915, 18 January 1912.
 34. Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 22 January 1912, p.30; 5 February 1912, pp.48-52.
 35. *News*, 24 January 1912, pp.1-2; *Ibid.*, 25 January 1912, p.11.
 36. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *Star*, 24 January 1912.
 37. *The Lance*, Vol. IV, 3 February 1912, p.3; *News*, 29 January 1912, p.11.
 38. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *World*, n.d.
 39. *Ibid.*, unidentified cutting, n.d.
 40. *Star*, 22 January 1912, p.3.
 41. *Ibid.*, 24 January 1912, p.15.
 42. *Ibid.*, 25 January 1912, p.9.
 43. LDA papers, scrapbooks, unidentified cutting, n.d.
 44. *Ibid.*, *World*, 5 March 1912.
 45. *News*, 19 January 1912, p.6.
 46. *Star*, 7 February 1912, p.6.
 47. *Jack Canuck*, Vol. I, 27 January 1912, p.14.
 48. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *Jack Canuck*, 14 September 1912.
 49. Armstrong and Nelles, *Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company*, pp.156-57.
 50. Gene Howard Homel, "Business, Labour, and the Reform of Housing and Street Railways in Toronto, 1900-1914," paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association, Annual Meeting, Montreal, 1980.
 51. *Saturday Night*, Vol. 25, 3 February 1912, p.1.
 52. *News*, 26 January 1912, p.1.
 53. *Star*, 27 January 1912, p.9; *Globe*, 27 January 1912, p.5. Even J.W. Flavelle, despite his staunch support for Sabbath observance, felt that the protest was justified. Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart. 1858-1939* (Toronto, 1978), p.210.
 54. Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1912, 5 February 1912, pp.48-52; *Globe*, 6 February 1912, p.9.
 55. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *Telegram* and *News*, 27 January 1912.
 56. *Telegram*, 1 February 1912, p.16; *Star*, 1 February 1912, p.15; *News*, 1 February 1912, p.3; *Globe*, 1 February 1912, p.8.
 57. LDA papers, *The Lord's Day Advocate*, Vol. 9, February 1912.
 58. *Star*, 1 February 1912, p.1.
 59. *Ibid.*, 6 February 1912, p.2; *Globe*, 6 February 1912, p.9; *Telegram*, 6 February 1912, p.16; Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1912, 5 February 1912, pp.48-52. Simpson was a member of the federal Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education.
 60. *Star*, 14 February 1912, p.9.
 61. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1912, p.2.
 62. Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 19 February 1912, p.75; Appendix "B", p.55.
 63. LDA papers, scrapbooks, *World*, 5 March 1912.
 64. Toronto City Council, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1912, 30 October 1912, p.460; 25 November 1912, p.511.
 65. *Star*, 6 January 1913, p.2.
 66. This paragraph is based on a City of Toronto Parks Department file on "Sunday Use of Parks," 1938-1939, and additional information provided to me by R. Scott James, City Archivist of Toronto, in a letter of 12 March 1980. My thanks to Mr. James for his help.
 67. See Burnet, "The Urban Community and Changing Moral Standards."
 68. *Minutes of The Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada. Annual Meeting, September 6th, 1912*, p.8.
 69. On McCarthy see Allen, *The Social Passion*, p.25; and John C. Weaver, "The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880-1915," in Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto, 1979).
 70. This assessment of the Sunday sliders is based upon an impressionistic survey of the names and addresses of those listed in the newspapers as tobogganists. The names are usually those of individuals injured in accidents.
 71. *Minutes of The Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada. Annual Meeting, September 23rd, 1910*, p.18.
 72. Charlton, *Speeches and Addresses*, p.286.
 73. *News*, 29 January 1912, p.11.
 74. H.C. Hocken, "The New Spirit in Municipal Government," in Canadian Club of Ottawa, *Addresses* (Ottawa, 1914).
 75. On Simpson, see LDA papers, Toronto Branch, LDA, minutebooks, 1900-1909; on O'Donoghue see *Ibid.*, Rev. J.G. Shearer to D.J. O'Donoghue, 10 November 1906; *The Lord's Day Advocate*, Vol. 4, February 1907.
 76. *News*, 5 February 1912, p.6.
 77. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), pp.331-33. I wish to thank the referees from *Urban History Review* for their helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.