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# Comment & Opinions

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## EDITORIAL

### Timing is the worst

How ironic that the week after the world environmental conference in Kyoto, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville discusses a plan to disband its own environment advisory committee.

The recommendation to kill the seven-member citizen committee not only looks bad, it IS bad and the timing couldn't be worse.

Thankfully, faced with irate taxpayers upon its first meeting, the newly-elected council is temporarily shelving the recommendation. Council has now promised to review the recommendation to disband the committee, and come up with a set of guidelines and references for the group.

Some charge that the committee stepped on council's toes and tried to get involved in planning matters. It may have put out some members of town staff and some members of council. Perhaps that's why there's a move afoot to kill it.

Yet the fact remains that environmental and planning issues are two sides of the same coin — they are very much involved. Any council of the 1990s should be pleased to have committed, caring citizens with professional expertise who are willing to give advice — to council AND taxpayers — and promote ecological issues.

Best of all, the committee certainly gave taxpayers more than its money's worth. They have accomplished a lot — given that they had little or no direction — for \$150.

If given a mandate and a new lease on life, the environment committee should provide far-reaching benefits over the next three years.



## Environment group should be protected

People of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and the new council — Wake up and smell the coffee!

Council may decide to get rid of the Town Environmental Advisory Committee — a three-part committee consisting of the trees committee, waste management committee, and the kettle lakes committee.

The mayor and council may take more public input out of our town decisions, quite possibly in the area that directly affects us most — our environment.

Think about it. People on kettle lakes, how do you feel knowing the history of our town in dealing with problems and creating the problems in the lakes you live on?

If you live in the heritage areas of Stouffville, look up at the trees, see the decay, see the trees falling down around you. Is this a good decision or is this a step backwards?

How about that garbage contract that will be coming up again — do you remember how it did not go to tender before? Would you like the public to have proper input this time?

I'm not saying this as a politician who just lost an election. If it were not for the system this town created and

perpetuated for so many years not only would I not have run for mayor in the last election, but I would not have been a councillor. I probably would never have even come back to a second council meeting years ago.

Let's learn from our mistakes, talk to the people, work it out.

Look at how many user groups or residents groups formed in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Why were these groups formed?

Because people needed strength in numbers. They found out there were other people like themselves, feeling ignored and misled.

Is it smart to get rid of the people who care about preserving our lakes, trees, wetlands and other areas of environmental concern within the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville?

Look around you, is it cost efficient to let our town's environment get any worse?

The trees in heritage Stouffville could have been properly maintained — we could be planning for our future by looking after them. They will cost

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more to repair or replace in the long run.

In the meantime, we have to look up when we park our cars, and wonder if it is safe to swim in the water, or even safe to drink the water.

This is not 'tree hugging', this is common sense and proper planning.

The people who felt strongly enough to work on this committee received only one real assignment the whole three-year term of the last council.

So we found our own initiatives, some of which were: lake testing programs for Clark, Simeon, Preston, and Musselman Lakes; initiation of stewardship programs for the above lakes; kettle lakes newsletter; photographic study of the shorelines of Preston and Musselman Lakes; initiation of mapping of all environmentally-significant areas within the town; reviews of the waste management and recycling programs; reviews of the forestry tender; Earth Day tree plantings for schools; sapling handouts to students and residents; and greenspace articles in the paper.

We took it upon ourselves to do these projects. The total cost of all of these projects to the town was under \$150. Where else can you get that kind of bang for your buck?

Certainly not from staff, and there won't be the incentive for them to go the extra mile!

This committee was made up of residents from all areas of our town with all kinds of expertise. We had owners of recycling companies, organization presidents, people who do environmental assessments for industry, publishing personnel, certified arborists, horticulturalists and your next-door neighbours.

As a member of this committee, I was disgusted at how under utilized we were. There is so much potential there, but the public involvement conflicts with development plans in our town.

No one in our town offices, including the mayor and most council members, has ever been willing to see the two can go hand in hand, it just takes proper long-term planning to benefit both new and existing residents' needs.

Maybe this is for the better. At least now the mayor and council cannot take any credit for our work and will stand alone with staff on all environmental issues.

To every one who helped me in my election and voted for me, thank you very much and Merry Christmas!

It certainly has not taken long to see people's true colours (open government at its best).

To everyone else, enjoy your new town hall. But remember, we will be back in three years for a rematch!

With great regrets,  
Mike Watson  
Stouffville

### Do children understand message of giving?

Dear Editor,

Re: The Other "G" word.

What to get and where to get that special gift?

The frenzy seems to start earlier every year, hardly limited to the "Twelve Days" or to what we can afford.

Lost in the hub-bub for many is that central message that the big birthday is really about GIVING.

Sure, we adults know that message, but the commercial focus is on kids. Is time taken to explain the reason for

Are there other ways kids with little or no money of their own to spend can show thanks?

Perhaps a prior suggestion is worth repeating and that is of taking an unwrapped gift, chosen from under the tree and given to a church or charity, even after the "birthday". Selflessness and consideration of others are virtues that need to be taught to our little loved ones!

Happy holidays.

Herb Bell  
Ballantrae

## STOUFFVILLE TRIBUNE

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