

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Overwhelming growth threat to quality of life

'When I moved to Markham more than 17 years ago, I was drawn by the mix of urban and natural settings, as were most people. In the current unseemly haste to pave our town from border to border, we are also allowing our green space, one of the attractions for moving here, to fall to the bulldozer.'

— Colin Creasey, Unionville

'Stop further development in Richmond Hill. There is no green left! No arable land left! This is craziness. Do we really need more service stations?'

— Susanna Willemsen, Richmond Hill

The letters have been effusive in their pleas for increased awareness of what is happening to York Region's environment.

We've talked about the growth of our communities, about the development about population projections that see almost every municipality increasing in size by 2021.

We've talked about school boards facing incredible crunches as they try to accommodate students in schools that are already overflowing.

We've heard from health officials that they fear the future — how will they serve a larger (and aging) population that turns up in their emergency departments when they aren't able to get the funding they need to maintain current service levels?

And we've heard from commuters, fed up with traffic jams on every major thoroughfare in the region, as they try to get to their jobs each day in Toronto and in other York municipalities.

York Region's ability to manage overwhelming growth has been the focus of public attention — mainly because residents are worried about how that growth will affect their lives.

CONCRETE JUNGLE

Environmental issues that have been raised recently in our own letters pages, from readers throughout the region, are simply an extension of the growth issue.

The letters have given us pause for thought. Just how much is too much? Are we getting too big to manage our world properly, to maintain the quality of life we have come to expect?

People who move to York Region do so because, for many, it represents an escape from a concrete jungle, or from faceless suburbia, to a pretty, tree-infested community, with parks for the children to play in and neighbours who lean over the fence to say hello at the end of the day.

If growth is overwhelming, that quality of life is in jeopardy. Unless our politicians, our government agencies and the development industry are attuned to the concerns of residents, such as those who took the time to write to us to share their views, the delicate balance between growth and maintaining that quality of life will be lost.

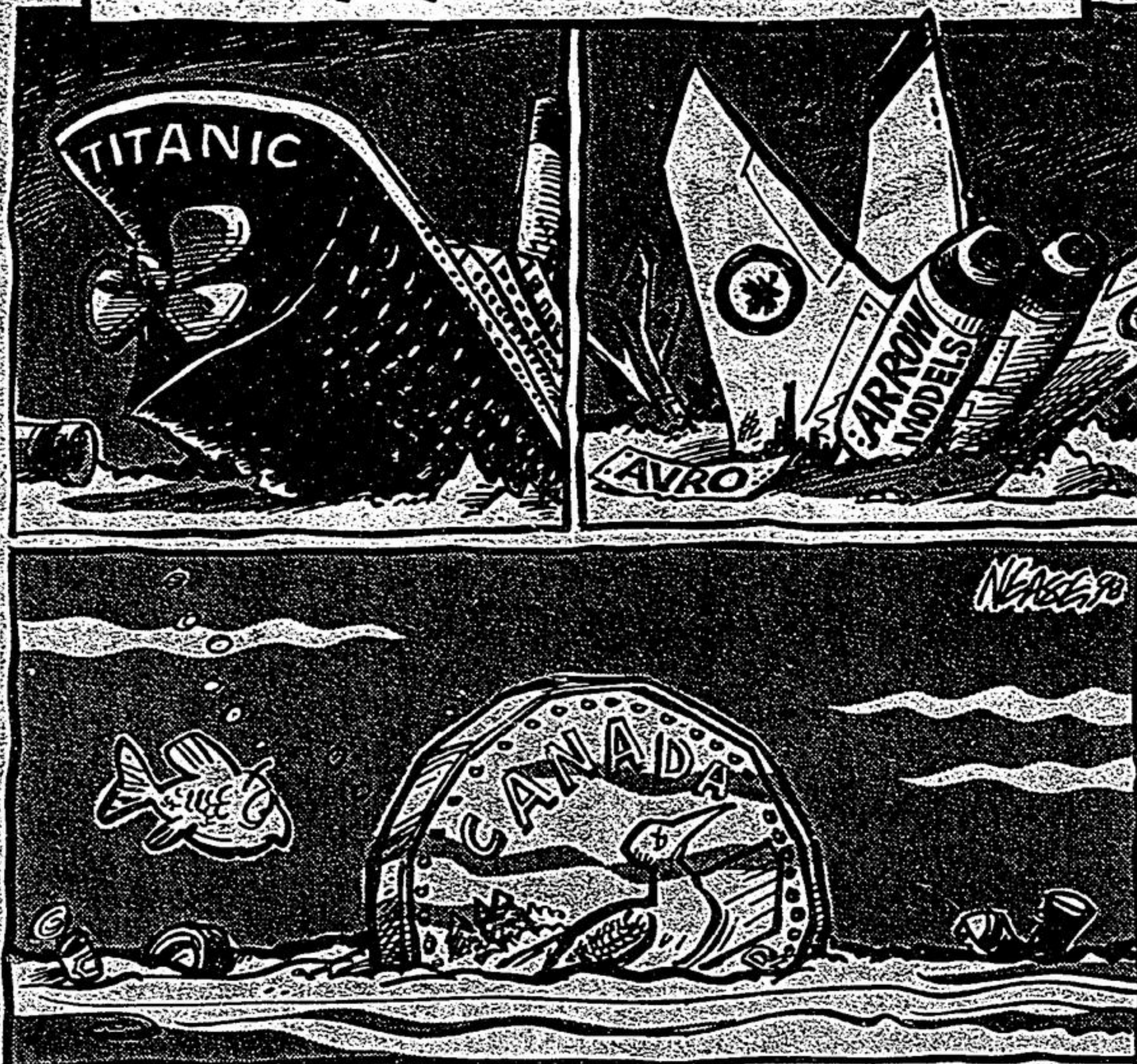
It's a challenge regional officials recognize. They're striving for solutions to the problems associated with growth, including environmental concerns. It's clear they're sensitive to the vital importance of planning growth, assessing its impact and avoiding associated problems.

As citizens, we can do what Susanna Willemsen, and Colin Creasey have done.

They monitor their communities, they ask whether or not a development project could threaten their quality of life, and they try to make our elected officials accountable by asking for explanations.

OPINION

TRICKY SALVAGE OPERATIONS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Books offer guidance for teens facing adulthood

I am writing in regard to the article *Parent wants book pulled by school*, in your Aug. 6 edition.

As a 17-year-old student, also attending Unionville High School, I was alarmed to see that Karen Nanninga had wanted the book *Fade* to be removed from circulation.

She stated that "I'm not ready to let this go, I'm not willing to let other children read this."

I thank her for her concern, but I completely disagree with her methods and reasoning.

I absolutely refuse to have someone remove my right to read, and afterwards make a report on this novel or any other novel the school board has presented to me.

Having completed the same independent study unit (I happened to read *Flowers for Algernon*), I was not surprised to see *Fade* offered, considering the unit was coming of age/loss of innocence.

How can you accurately depict such a serious topic without using mature reading as a baseline?

It's ironic that by trying to censor these books, you are forever trying to protect us from our own fall from innocence.

Parents have a responsibility to let us (teenagers) do some growing on our own, instead of having the parents always dictate what is best for us.

This is a hard time in our lives right now, and you can't expect us to be able

to keep growing without some kind of guidance. These books are that guidance.

If these books are removed from the shelves, who's to stop it from going to the other extreme, where every book is deemed controversial and therefore shouldn't be read by "children."

Eventually, what you're left with are text books, because at least one person will have a problem with a certain book.

Is this the kind of life you want your child to be living in, a life where we are forever sheltered from the world in which we live?

As parents, you must consider what is truly best (not what makes you feel better) for your child.

STERLING LEE
MARKHAM

Thanks for donations

The Stouffville Tribune's thrice weekly newspaper does an excellent job in serving the town of Stouffville.

Many successful organizations have been the recipient of funds which have been raised through your paper.

We personally appreciate the article concerning the need for funds for the Salvation Army project.

We have not reached our goal as yet but there is still time to get involved by mailing a cheque to the Salvation Army Special Project Markham Corps, 9329 McCowan Rd., Markham L3P 3J3. You will receive a tax receipt for your donation.

CLIFF AND BERTHA MOSS
MARKHAM



Doug Devine

All isn't fair in the arena of property taxes

From the very beginning, it was clear that the province's controversial equal value assessment was going to be a politician's worst nightmare.

By basing property taxes across the province on a uniform formula, the Tories have made it possible to compare taxes from one town to another.

In other words, the owner of a small home in Aurora can now compare his or her property taxes with those paid by a similar home in Toronto, Newmarket, Vaughan or Kenora.

And, as the owner of a small home in Aurora, it now appears clear those comparisons will raise some tricky questions for the politicians who are supposed to be representing me.

The first question is why my taxes will jump a whopping 28 per cent over last year, especially since my assessed value is exactly the amount I paid for the house eight years ago?

A helpful town official explained about 60 per cent of that increase is due to reassessment. The rest is due primarily to the province forcing towns to shift more of the tax burden from commercial/industrial properties to residential properties.

As confusing as all that sounds, I was willing to accept the general premise that everybody will be paying their fair share of property taxes in Ontario for the first time in decades — especially all those rich Toronto residents living in fancy mansions minutes from downtown with services galore, including free access to recreation facilities and the provincially subsidized TTC and subway systems.

But then I checked the tax rates in the city. A Toronto home of equal value to mine will be paying \$240 less than I will this year. How can that be?

There is some solace in knowing I am not alone in this tax quandary.

The first reaction is to phone up the mayor and demand to know why our taxes are so much higher than the city's. Higher taxes for lower services and longer commutes doesn't sound like the suburban dream thousands of people were seeking when they moved here over the past decade.

But blaming local politicians would be unfair. Most of the blame for our higher tax rates lies with the province.

Which is where my local politicians come in.

When will York Region councillors and regional chairperson Bill Fisch stand up and fight for our rights?

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