

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

More social housing needed in York

Many in our communities may not realize that social housing is actually an issue — an issue that is going to become increasingly important as York Region's population both increases and ages over the next 20 years.

Sadly, far too many people equate the concept of social, or subsidized housing with low-income housing projects.

There is often a bias against such developments as people shy away from having 'one of them' located near their home. Rare, it seems, is the neighbourhood which would welcome a co-op or social housing project. Residents become upset, and worry about the "wrong" kind of people moving in.

What they forget is that social housing covers a wide range of projects.

For instance, Parkview Village in Stouffville is such a facility. And it's a beautiful complex for seniors in the community, with a long waiting list of would-be residents.

The Water Street seniors residence in Markham is another such example.

Both these facilities provide housing for long-time residents, many the parents or grandparents of the same people who might oppose social housing in their neighbourhood.

Making the job of those who want to build social housing in the region even tougher are recent changes made by the Province of Ontario. As it has said many times before, the provincial government is getting out of the social housing business.

At the same time, it's dropped the bill for social costs on to regional governments. In York's case, the numbers work out badly as more than half of the \$73.5 million we are obliged to pay, goes to Toronto under provincial pooling rules.

That leaves York residents on the short end of the stick when it comes to social housing.

Robin Campbell, executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, said the Greater Toronto Area is already seeing the effects of a lack of social housing.

"We're seeing increased homelessness and people who are not able to stabilize their personal situation," she said. "It's in everybody's interest that people have a place to live, to raise their children and to grow old in."

If we don't begin to take the issue of social housing more seriously, we're going to be in big trouble in the near future.

A change in attitude would help. What would also help is a change in the funding structure to make sure our social service dollars stay here, where it's needed.

CHEERS & JEERS

■ **CHEERS** to Project Linus volunteers for helping comfort traumatized children at York Region's three hospitals by delivering warm blankets to them for added "security."

■ **JEERS** to teachers who blame the press for 'skewing' facts about their dispute with the board of education. Don't shoot the messenger. Parents want their kids learning in the classroom and are fed up with the rhetoric coming from all sides in this issue.

■ **CHEERS** to regional politicians who are considering slowing down the pace of development until services, roads and infrastructure are in place.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Communism is dead

Re: Article in the Tuesday, Nov. 10 *Stouffville Tribune*, entitled 'Region's hunger will grow, forum told.'

At the York Region's forum on hunger, Toronto Food Share spokesperson Debbie Fields was reported as saying: "Until food is taken out of the general marketplace and given universally those who need it, hunger and malnutrition will continue." I

it may come as a surprise to Fields that communism is dead.

Fields complains the Harris government cuts to welfare were too much, but the taxpayer is still forking out \$5 billion each year. How much is enough?

Helping those in need is one thing. But if everyone is to get free food and \$20,000 a year on welfare, who is going to work for \$25,000 and pay taxes.

In Fields' Utopia, who will pay for the social benefits we demand?

J. SHAW
MARKHAM

Farmland loss dangerous

I found *The Stouffville Tribune* article titled 'Region's hunger will grow, forum told,' in the Nov. 10 issue, most interesting.

Over the last 20 years, as Southern Ontario has grown and grown, some of Canada's highest quality farmland has disappeared.

Yet, no voices have spoken up, even to ask the question: "What will be the result of this loss of farmland?"

Here in York Region, more and more high quality farmland is going to disappear. No one seems to care.

I have written to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and it points out there is disagreement even among their members about the issue of the loss of farmland.

I've written to officials at the municipal level and have not yet received an acceptable response.

I have written to the federal government and have not received a response. Isn't anyone concerned about the loss of our high quality farmland, a precious and valuable natural resource?

JIM W. PRIEBE
STOUFFVILLE

Tribune editorial ignorant

Your editorial of Thursday, Nov. 19, entitled 'Two sides have swapped places in battle,' was remarkable.

After describing the general sentiment of the public regarding the working conditions of teachers, you point out that the public expects the turmoil to cease.

Ignoring, for the moment, the context of the battle between the board and the teachers, I find it disturbing that any newspaper would agree with a position grounded proudly in wilful ignorance, and implicitly endorse the idea that such an opinion or position is valid or worth consideration by any intelligent person.

You are arguing that the work you do in gathering and disseminating news and information is unnecessary.

How many more issues of *The Tribune* will we see, then?

MATT DOURIS
STOUFFVILLE



Dave Teetzel

Political minds stumped by tax bill fiasco

If you happen to own a factory in York Region, you have an opportunity to play the hottest new street game, Three Tax Bill Monte. The way it's played is the province changes your tax bill — maybe it'll go down, maybe it'll go up. But no matter what you do, it's going up.

See if you can follow this.

The property tax reassessment ordered by the province caused many tax bills to increase, some by more than double.

So the province brought in forcible tax relief — clawing back money from those who got tax breaks and using it to ensure nobody was hit with a hike of more than 10 per cent this year.

But to ensure your town council didn't go raiding your home taxes to give a multinational corporation a break, the legislation requires that money for industrial tax relief must come from the industrial tax pot.

But because there aren't enough industries in York Region getting tax breaks to balance out those getting huge tax increases, tax breaks are being clawed back at a rate of 114.46 per cent.

That means if your factory was getting a \$1,000 tax cut, it's now getting a \$145 increase.

But look on the bright side.

You may no longer be getting a tax cut, but — because your taxes are now going up more than 10 per cent — you qualify for tax relief.

That "splat" you hear is the sound of all the region's economic development officers jumping out of their office windows in unison.

This brings up one important question. No, not "how do we fix this stupid situation?" The question is "who do we blame?"

The province blames municipalities for not using the tools it provided in the first place. "You dropped the ball," is how Scarborough MPP Steve Gilchrist, parliamentary assistant to Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach, so eloquently put it to the assembled GTA mayors last Friday. Municipal politicians, on the other hand, suggest that the province's tools didn't work outside Toronto. They said they had found better solutions before the province imposed its funny farm rules on them.

"You dropped the ball," is how the assembled GTA mayors so eloquently put it to Gilchrist.

All of which tells you not to expect our finest political minds to solve the problem. They've all dropped the ball.

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