

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ont. L3P 1M3

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EDITORIAL

Province must ban moraine development

Enough is enough. It's time to ban development on the Oak Ridges Moraine. Last night, Richmond Hill council was expected to endorse a plan clearing the way for developers to finish covering that town's portion of the environmentally sensitive moraine with subdivisions. (Our newspaper went to press before the meeting began.)

Assuming Richmond Hill council has again dropped the ball on protecting the moraine, it's time for the province to step up to the plate. Under the Richmond Hill plan, developers will be allowed to build as many as 17,000 homes on a 3,500-hectare swath of moraine cutting east-west across the entire town.

This, despite the fact opponents have been lining up for years to beg council to block development on the moraine — everyone from local MPPs and residents to scientists.

Councillors and the town's planners argue the best way to protect the moraine is to allow some development on it, while enforcing strict environmental controls on the developers.

And they insist trying to ban development poses a far greater threat because the Ontario Municipal Board would overrule them and approve development with no controls.

But those arguments appear to be losing a bit of their validity, judging from two recent comments by key officials.

First, a letter from the Municipal Affairs Ministry called for tougher environmental controls and a wider natural corridor. Then OMB official James Mills insisted Richmond Hill council is not helpless in deciding the fate of the moraine.

But since it appears Richmond Hill council is still too timid to stand up to the developers and say no, it's time for the province to take charge. Only the province has the power necessary to declare the moraine off-limits to developers and turn it into a park.

Opponents of the park plan argue it will cost the government at least \$1 billion to buy the land from the current owners. But that estimate is based on values greatly inflated by the potential for development. Declaring the land permanent open space will reduce that value.

That may anger developers who have been buying up moraine land for decades in the hopes of getting it rezoned. But land speculation has always been a risky game and this is clearly one time the developers must lose.

OPINION

News Item: Ottawa announces the end of the thousand dollar bill...



TELEPHONE
(905) 294-2200
FAX: (905) 294-1538
EMAIL: newsroom@econsun.com



Debora Kelly

Right to bear arms does anything but protect people

It gives me the creeps. Ted Morton is vowing to continue the battle in the courts against Canada's gun control bill, launching a new lawsuit within the next few months that argues the federal law infringes on the right to liberty guaranteed in the Charter of Rights.

That's just a little too wave-the Stars-and-Stripes, God-bless-America for me.

There is an epidemic of slaughter in American streets. Let's look at the facts: last year, nine people were killed with guns in Holland; 12 in Australia; 18 in Japan; 20 in France; 31 in England; 35 in Sweden; 108 in Canada; and (drum roll, please) close to 40,000 people were killed by guns in the U.S. in one year.

In America's gun culture, the "right to bear arms" is a fiercely protected constitutional right. But as the figures prove, owning guns hasn't protected U.S. citizens — on the contrary.

It's God Bless Canada, if you ask me.

This week, the Supreme Court heard the arguments of Morton and other gun control opponents — not to mention seven provinces and territories, including Ontario — that the 1995 Firearms Act should be struck down because the licensing of firearms is a provincial, not federal responsibility.

Ottawa, backed by pro-gun control organizations, police chiefs and the City of Toronto, insists it has the right to protect public safety.

Canadian law has required licensing and registration of handguns since the 1930s. The new law extends that law to shotguns and rifles, which account for more deaths than handguns do.

Should the gun control opponents lose this battle, Plan B kicks in — whatever is necessary to tie this legislation up in the courts, Morton has declared.

No rational person thinks gun control will prevent all senseless murders and injuries and tragic accidents.

Or prevent the wrong person from getting a gun if he really wants one.

Nor will criminals be lining up for firearm licences or to register the guns they smuggled across the border, for goodness' sake.

Certainly, a rational person knows well simply owning a gun does not a criminal make. There are law-abiding citizens who own guns, including farmers, hunters and gun collectors.

Advocates of the gun control law argue licensing can help screen out people who might use a weapon to harm themselves or others and that a registry may help track down weapons.

It just seems so simple to me: you own a gun, you register it. What's the big deal? What has a responsible gun owner to fear from this law?

If there's any chance this law will increase public safety one iota, I'm for it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Comparing today's gas prices to last year's add fuel to the fire

Re: *Fuming over gas prices*, Feb. 17.
Staff writer Mike Adler writes about the impact rising diesel prices are having on local trucking firms.

The quote attributed to Mike Skelton, operations manager for Skelton Truck Lines, that diesel prices have risen from 21 cents last year to 62 cents is deceiving.

When comparing today's price with that of a year ago, you must compare apples to apples. The price of 21 cents excludes taxes, while 62 cents includes taxes. Taking federal and provincial taxes (18 cents) out of 62 cents takes that price closer to 44 cents. In other words, his company's diesel costs have doubled, not tripled — as your article implies — in the past year.

With so many people believing everything they see or hear these days, your reporters must be certain that every word they put into print is 100-per-cent accurate.

Please do not add more fuel to an already volatile situation.

MICHAEL W. HILL
THORNHILL

Gay rights billboards should be banned, along with election signs

Re: *Complaints registered on gay billboards*, Jan. 27.

We wholeheartedly support Markham

Mayor Don Cousens' position with regard to the signs and his decision to withdraw his support.

Whether "It's not a choice" is fact or fiction (and many thoughtful people have differing views), the signs unnecessarily escalate feelings when, in fact, we should be working to reduce them.

As for us, we'd be happy with no signs for any reason, but particularly at election time.

JAMES BOEHMER
STOUFFVILLE

Oak Ridges Moraine should not become part of our past

One of the many charms of York Region towns lies in their proximity to natural surroundings.

Yet, over the years, Richmond Hill council has systematically obliterated most of its farmlands, building houses irrespective of any modifications to the infrastructure and has not only displayed an acute incompetence for urban planning, but a total disregard for nature.

The difficulties with urban planning might lie with the population explosion of late. But at the dawn of this century, it is utterly inexcusable to pursue a development project that directly and obviously poses a very real threat to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

History will damn those who damn the Oak Ridges Moraine.

RYAN MITCHELL
RICHMOND HILL

LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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Stouffville Tribune

Serving the community since 1888



Canadian Circulation Audit Board Member



Ontario Press Council

Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement #1403419
Subscription rates by mail: 1 year - \$69.55 (Tuesdays only)

Stouffville Tribune, published every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd. group of newspapers, which includes the Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Alliston Herald/Courier, Barrie Advance, Barry's Bay This Week, Bolton Enterprise, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Shopping News, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, East York Mirror, Erin Advocate/Country Routes, Etobicoke Guardian, Flamborough Post, Georgetown Independent/Action Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Midland/Penetanguishene Mirror, Milton Canadian Champion, Milton Shopping News, Mississauga News, Newmarket Aurora, Georgina Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Oakville Shopping News, Orillia Today, Oshawa/Whitby/Clarington/Port Perry This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Stouffville Tribune, Today's Seniors, Uxbridge Tribune and City of York Guardian.

Phone: (905) 294-2200
Fax: (905) 294-1538

Classified: 1-800-743-3353

Distribution: (905) 294-8244