

Stouffville Tribune

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OPINION

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EDITORIAL  
Transportation, trash  
must be top priorities

Transportation and trash are the critical topics for York Region councillors and bureaucrats in 2001.

The environment, amalgamation and social housing are other important issues, but not so pressing as transit and garbage.

The huge influx of new residents and new businesses in York Region means services are pressed. There are too many cars and too few arterial roads. There are more people and, consequently, more trash bags at more curbs throughout the region.

We have asked, repeatedly, what will the region do to offer gridlocked commuters better transit options? And we have also asked, after 12 years of debate, how far has the region come in its plans for managing a looming garbage crisis?

The fact is, the region made both transit and trash priorities for 2000.

There's now a regional transit system that incorporates the nine municipal transit systems into one entity. That's a good step, but it's not a definitive answer. We're not much further ahead than we were a year ago.

In 20 years, the Greater Toronto Area's population will increase to more than 7 million people. The newcomers will add more than a million vehicles to local roads, 3.7 million cars and trucks, pushing up rush-hour car trips by 50 per cent, 3.6 million a day, by 2021.

No wonder we have road rage incidents.

But there are also millions of dollars worth of commitments to improve transportation in the region, from \$200 million in improvements to provincial highways across the GTA to a \$37-million commitment to widen Hwy. 404 north in Aurora and extend the road to Green Lane, from the extension of Hwy. 407 into Durham by the end of next year to the \$1 billion that is needed to expand GO Transit rail lines in York Region.

The intent is there... the cash is an issue.

And in trash, it's becoming critical to find an appropriate way to dispose of garbage. With the Keele Valley landfill scheduled to close in 2002, the region has to find a solution for dealing with 175,000 tonnes of waste annually.

York Region has spent \$25.2 million to collect and dispose of its waste this year, including \$3.4 million on recycling. By 2003, the figure would jump to as high as \$57 million, with \$18 million needed for recycling.

We should be looking at improving diversion, at alternatives such as incineration, at options such as composting on a dramatic scale.

There's more to disposing of waste than shipping it to someone else's back yard and burying it. Education is also key — encouraging the public to divert can be challenging, but it's a necessity.

Councillors are scheduled to study the issue at a series of workshops this spring, hopefully arriving at some kind of answer.

But as Aurora deputy mayor John West points out, the region has visited countries with other options and, in 12 years, has made no progress to deal with the crisis.

And, again, cash becomes a critical issue.

We can continue to lobby the province. We can continue to find funding from other programs and resources in York Region. But it's imperative regional officials continue working on solutions for these two critical issues.

If we can't get around the region with relative ease and if we're buried under a mountain of trash our regional economy will take a turn for the worse. New businesses will not choose York Region as a home.

And no one wants that to happen.

Environment slipping  
away on salty roads

Road salt. It's slowly and silently destroying our natural resources and it's time to investigate alternatives.

Experts, however, are brushing aside the notion on the grounds salt is more effective, safer and cheaper, by far, than any available alternative.

And while it's good to keep an eye on taxpayers' money, that kind of thinking is short-sighted.

While it costs just more than \$1 million to sand and salt nearly 3,000 kilometres of regional roads, experts say that figure could rise to an astounding \$34 million with use of natural-based spreaders, such as grains and other agricultural products.

Despite that, Regional Councillor Diane Humeniuk will crusade for a 50-per-cent reduction of salt on regional roads and will push for the eventual elimination of its use.

Humeniuk points out effects to our precious water supplies and deterioration of our roads, cars and natural resources will be far more costly in the long run with the continued use of road salt.

To their credit, most public works departments have already cut down on salt over the years, mixing the toxic ice-buster with sand. But that's not enough.

Humeniuk points to studies in both the U.S. and at the University of Guelph that show alternatives to road salt can be economical, effective and environmentally friendly.

It is time we stopped adding to nature's demise and think of ways to soften the blow.

One cottage community, Bancroft, has eliminated road salt and officials say a magnesium-based product is just as effective. In fact, officials in the cottage community report no increase in road accidents or the town's budget.

York Region should take the time to look into this important environmental issue. Efforts now may save more than just dollars down the road.



Drag letter writers  
into 20th century

Many of your recent letter writers obviously have very fixed and simple ideas about teacher contract disputes.

Those teachers, they think, who stand up for their basic human rights to negotiate collectively are complainers, don't deserve respect and definitely don't need good salaries.

However, those teachers who quietly accept whatever the school board offers are dedicated, love students and get on with their work.

These same correspondents tell us what it was like in a mythological perfect golden age, the "good old days", when teachers were worked to death, suffered ridiculous regulations and accepted their pittance gratefully. Or they tell us how teachers would fare in the "real world".

These same correspondents should be hauled by the scruff of the neck into the third millennium, should be forced to study the mechanisms of collective bargaining and should stop demonizing teachers.

If they think teaching is so easy, try it. If extra-curricular activities are so necessary, so easy to do, and should be done, for no charge, quick, rush to sign on instead of constantly moaning, groaning and whining about what other people should be doing.

JAMES P. B. KELLY  
MARKHAM

Harris giveth and Harris  
taketh away

I saw a news item showing Premier Mike Harris delivering toys to the Christmas Wish Fund. As the premier was shown with an armload of toys in his arms, the commentator said Harris wanted every child in Ontario to have something for Christmas.

Tonight on the news, it was reported the Ontario government is passing a 60-hour work week.

It's certainly heartwarming to know the premier is taking on the task of ensuring every child in Ontario has something for Christmas because with a 60-hour work week, no parent will have time to buy anything for their children.

WENDY POOLE  
MARKHAM

Snowbanks block view  
and create safety hazard

My son was almost struck by a car — trying to run a red light — at the intersection of Birchmount Road and Risebrough Circuit. The driver could not see my son because of the snowbank on the north-west corner of the intersection.

I drove by at 10 p.m., Dec 14 to check the area for myself. The snowbank on that corner was

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about six-feet high. In fact, the button for pedestrians to push for the crosswalk light was barely within reach, especially for young children, as the snow around the post had not been cleared.

I called the Town of Markham to report the snowbank after my son told me what nearly happened had not been cleared.

I was informed the main roads would be plowed first, followed by the side roads, and then the snowbanks would be dealt with.

I suggested since Birchmount/Risebrough is a school crossing, perhaps the children's safety should be attended to first. The response I received was, "Everything comes first." I could have been mistaken, but I thought I detected a tone of sarcasm in the response.

I know the election is over, but I think, perhaps, our town officials need to remember our children do come first. Their safety is paramount. To have a six-foot snowbank at a school intersection is appalling. To have a crosswalk button barely within reach is equally appalling.

At that intersection, southbound traffic is coming around a curve in the road; the children will not be able to see cars from behind a huge snowbank until it's too late.

I'm interested to hear what the Town of Markham has to say on this subject and I believe it is an issue that concerns all of us in the community.

DAVID C. KING  
MARKHAM

Gridlock nightmare needs  
province's assistance

Re: Region to get tough on gridlock; Fisch, The Liberal, Dec. 17.

Gridlock is a problem that goes far beyond inconvenience. It's a major source of pollution killing thousands of frail Ontarians and damaging children's lungs. It is costing the business community hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue as trucks continually get caught in traffic jams.

What is the answer to this nightmare?

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch identifies part of the solution when he points to improving the public transportation system in the GTA.

But I found it interesting he didn't mention the source of funding for the improvements to the TTC, GO Transit and many other regional carriers.

South of the border, state governments subsidize transportation systems up to 70 per cent.

Yet Premier Mike Harris refuses to put a penny from the provincial coffers into the TTC or other GTA public transportation systems.

He even refuses to put provincial tax revenue from gas sales toward public transportation as thousands of idling cars burn their fuel every day while stuck in the quagmire of rush-hour traffic.

The cities of the GTA cannot further tax already burdened prop-

Board treating acclaimed  
trustee poorly

The treatment by York Region District School Board toward acclaimed Stouffville/East Gwillimbury trustee Bob Burrows is wrong.

Burrows was an excellent teacher. He taught my daughter for two years at Holland Landing Public School. I was expecting him to be an excellent trustee.

However, the school board claims he does not live in York Region and, therefore, cannot fill the position.

I repeat newly elected Trustee Alan Shefman's questions: What was the rationale the officials used in making this decision?

Why did they not let Burrows give his view of the situation? What public funds have been spent in collecting their information for this \$5,000-a-year job?

Now I understand it is going to court. We, the taxpayers, will pay again. If they want to remove him from this position, it should be debated in an open and public forum.

I am angry with the treatment Burrows received. It would make any competent and intelligent person shy away from public office in East Gwillimbury in the future.

PAM FULFORD  
HOLLAND LANDING

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discussions at yrng.com

Your opinion is important to us, for our letters to the editor pages and on our website.

We invite you to join the ongoing discussions at yrng.com and you're welcome to launch your own discussion there, too.

The site serves York Region Newspaper Group readers.

CHRIS DINSDALE  
NEWMARKET



Debora Kelly

Wireless wizards  
should invent  
the mitten tracker

So, now that I'm wired, I find out I should be unwired. W.A.P. — wireless application protocol — is where it's at for the tech-savvy and hip-geek alike, I'm told.

Last week, my company's IT guy was enthusiastically expounding on the wonders of his Blackberry, a wireless messaging device dreamed up by Waterloo's Research in Motion Ltd.

His e-mail, voice mail and just the information from W.A.P.-enabled websites that he wants can arrive via this small black object resting on the lunch table before us.

Apparently, more than 7 million of these hot little personal digital assistants abound in the United States.

Neat, eh? And I was still thinking cell phones were cool.

And that's another thing — in the near future, they say mobile phones will come equipped with large colour screens, fancy diary functions, built-in MP3 digital music players and video capabilities that allow us to watch film clips.

Is that cool or what? It's rather awe-inspiring, isn't it? Some young, bright visionaries are bringing the future to our everyday existence.

Or so I thought last week. Now, after another frantic, frazzled morning, I'm going to heap a little scorn on the tech-genies of the world.

Why do they keep inventing things that are undoubtedly cool, but, in the long run, aren't necessary in the mundane lives most of us lead?

I don't really need to have my e-mail follow me wherever I go.

I don't really need to watch a video while waiting in the automated teller queue at the bank.

What I do need in my life is a small W.A.P.-enabled device that would immediately tell me where my children's hats and mittens are every morning as we aim to start the day with some small measure of calm.

Practically every single morning, despite my frantic exhortations that they please, please, please bring said items from school/sitter's/Daddy's van into the house and place them in the hat-and-mittens box (conveniently placed beside the coat hooks — not that they ever use them, either), all we can ever find is partner-less gloves and mittens and back-up hats and headbands that really don't fit now.

Gosh, you can't even get lost in a car now, thanks to the whizzes who dreamed up a global positioning system.

If these guys are so smart, how about providing me with a few microchips I could embed in my kids' hat and mittens?

Each morning, with the assistance of a global satellite and wireless messaging device, I could then immediately ascertain where the missing items are.

Just like that. No more frantic searching — that gets more desperate as the moment when the school bell rings and the work day begins looms ever closer — of coat arms and backpacks and nooks and crannies.

No more threats, shouts, pouts and long, drawn-out explanations ringing in each horn.

I could immediately ascertain if the other mitten really is in Daddy's van.

I could immediately determine if the new hat, worn only once, really was "stolen" by a "nother kid" at school.

I would immediately know that the missing mitten was under Daddy's work boots on the boot tray, albeit a soggy discovery.

A peace settles over me just thinking about it.

Such a device would save my sanity, not to mention, help preserve the emotional stability of my children.

Now that would be cool.

No longer would my son and daughter be left wondering if I really meant it when I warned them (after purchasing yet another hat or pair of mittens or gloves), "If you lose these, don't bother coming home."

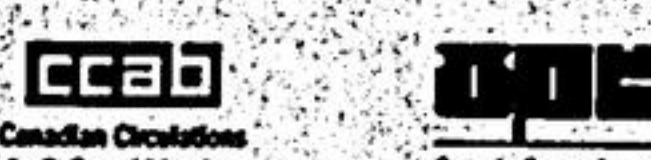
If you know any brilliant techie minds, would you mind passing along the request?

I'll put it on my wish list for cool things that I'd like to see happen in 2001.

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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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