

York has its bad neighbours, too

While tempting, blowing the whistle on your neighbour is hardly an easy thing to do.

Living near an eyesore is annoying, frustrating and unfair. Most of us have a Neighbour From Hell story. In York Region, the goings-on next door can upset entire neighbourhoods.

A children's day camp owner in the Whitchurch-Stouffville hamlet of Musselman's Lake has managed to tick off at least 95 per cent of the village over the past two years. Neighbours gathered and, after much soul searching, appealed to council for help.

The camp owner was told to take a rusty army truck off the road, dispose of an ugly house boat, put an end to the rowdy parties, stop violating every water rule known to humanity and clean up the junk, including the many boats in a state of disrepair.

The owner has indicated he wants to be a good citizen and has agreed to comply with the laws. He won't, however, budge on the house boat and the jury's still out on the army truck. Since the ugly house boat is on the lake, nobody knows who has jurisdiction. As we all know, ugly boats live forever.

I'm not too worried about them, but I smell the possibility of a drowning. Nine times out of 10, when too many violations are let go for too long, the result is a tragedy.

Here's another example. This week, people on Vivian Road pointed the finger at the Pine Orchard Camp, operating under the umbrella of the Free Methodist Church of Canada.

Legal action may be taken to stop the camp from operating with its 14 house trailers and more than 10,000 visitors a year. Camp officials claim



Joan Ransberry

the trailers are legal, while Whitchurch-Stouffville council isn't so sure.

This camp does not a good neighbour make, the Cedar Valley Ratepayers Association insists. Noise, debris and trailers are listed as main problems.

Speaking from a position of strength, Mayor Wayne Emmerson is insisting that the problems will be either cleaned up or the town will settle the matter in court.

Town staff is now preparing documents in case that's necessary. However, Mark Lawrence, chairperson of the camp's board of directors, is confident the differences can be settled without extreme action. Lawrence wants to keep the lines of communication open. This issue will not go to court, Lawrence said.

Area residents worry about the impact the camp could have on property value. If more trailers are allowed in, property values will drop, stressed ratepayers association president Michael Maurer. "We could end up with a full-blown trailer park," he said.

While Ward 1 Councillor Steve Pliakes questions the safety of Pine Orchard Camp, Ward 3 Councillor Peter Dobrich wants to know where 10,000 people are going to the bathroom. And you thought you had a slob for a neighbour.

Region looks for input into future

The Region of York is fine-tuning its vision for the future and it wants your input.

Vision 2026 updates the plan first drawn up eight years ago. Through a survey and several symposiums, the region wants residents to help determine what the community will look like in 25 years.

In conjunction with this process, the Economist & Sun/Tribune and its sister newspapers in York Region will feature articles examining issues such as growth, quality of life and a vision for the future.

As part of our series, we will be inviting readers to visit our website, yorkregion.com, starting next Thursday, to rank the qualities of life most important to you and your family, and tell us what the region's planning successes and flops are. Our newspapers and website will feature a picture gallery of the sites you choose. All entries qualify for a draw.

As well, we want students to write articles (of no more than 150 words) or draw pictures depicting York Region in 25 years. Two categories, grades 4 to 8 and grades 9 to 12, are available. Winners are eligible for prizes. Entries should be submitted to the Economist & Sun/Tribune by May 17.

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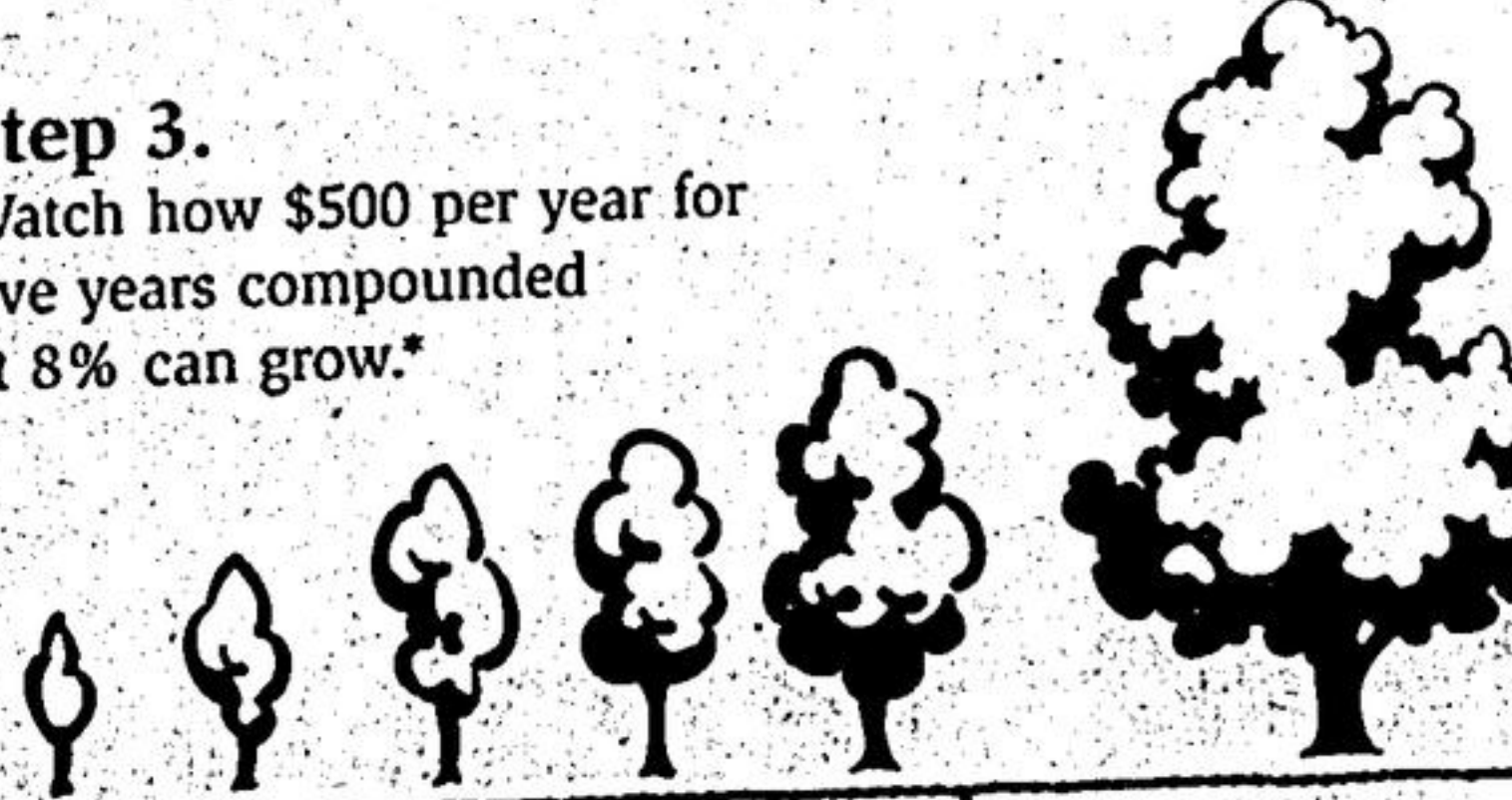
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