

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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Dave Teetzel

Our prized cashless society shows its Achilles heel

The door flew open and my wife burst in.

"If you want dessert, you're going to have to come to M&M with me. We have to use your credit card."

I began to protest about my Visa balance before fully sensing the anger at the other end of the conversation.

"The interac card doesn't work. I don't have any cash and I can't get any. The woman at the store said it's been like this all day."

So I got up from a perfectly good afternoon movie, deciding the dessert squares were worth the effort.

It was only when I switched on the evening news I realized how many people were in worse straits than I was.

As many as 13 million Canadians couldn't get at their money due to a hardware glitch at TD-Canada Trust. Longtime customers were turned away at the door, even as they pleaded for cash to buy food and medicine.

It was a business nightmare far exceeding the nightmare visions invoked by IBM commercials.

What I experienced last weekend was the inevitable result of trusting my finances to machines. In recent years, Canadians have been slowly lured into using computers for every financial function and expecting them to work.

Back in the good old days, you would find time between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to line up in a bank to deposit your paycheque and withdraw a little more money than you figured you would need.

If you ran out of cash on the weekend, you couldn't buy anything.

It was inconvenient, but you knew where you stood.

Today, you can impulse buy like a maniac knowing whatever it costs, you just have to swipe your card.

Money moves in and out your account with little involvement on your part. You can wait till the last possible minute to pay a bill by calling some voice mail drone and punching a bunch of keys.

But when the system crashes, suddenly you're in that nightmarish place where I was last weekend — use your credit card, go to the potluck empty-handed or (gasp!) make your own brownies from scratch. Oh the pain, the pain.

OK, so all things considered, this is an utterly trivial problem in light of what's going on in the world.

But it makes you think. This dependence on technology is becoming an Achilles heel for our society. A cyberterrorist could create economic havoc by snarling up computers for a while.

Sure, we have all kinds of firewalls and virus protection programs and stuff, but these things seem to fail a lot all by their lonesome.

I'm starting to think the "cashless society" isn't all it's cracked up to be.

EDITORIAL

Region's youth council an intelligent step in planning York's future

As part of York Region's Vision 2026 process, young people are actively being encouraged to get involved in helping plan for the future.

It is, after all, their future, no matter how trite that may sound.

So last week, when nine York Region youths, one representing each municipality, gathered at regional headquarters to talk about issues, give their insights and share their concerns with regional representatives, it was a positive step.

If you want people to care about what's happening around them, you have to give them ownership of the issues, the problems, the rewards and the successes. They have to own the franchise.

That's why the region should be congratulated for considering the formation of a youth council that would meet, talk about tough issues, send recommendations to regional council and express the young person's viewpoint on the future.

If the region is truly serious about listening to youth, then a permanent youth council, with members elected by young people across the region is definitely the answer.

The young people who expressed opinions last week demonstrated maturity, a grasp of their community's unique qualities in this demographically diverse region and a desire to make a difference.

Clayton Haluza, 17, served as chairperson of last week's meeting.

"The whole purpose of this (Vision 2026) is to map out the region's future and to do this without youth input wouldn't be doing it adequately," he said.

The establishment of a youth council is like having a G-1, a beginner's driving licence, for voting, he said.

In an era where we expect young people to demonstrate a weary cynicism, these comments are refreshing.

The young people who participated made a good point — this group traditionally feels left out. But if the region is simply trying to make political points with good public relations, it shouldn't bother.

Don't pretend to believe young people deserve to play an important role unless you mean it. The involvement has to be real.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Arguments on standardized testing flawed, unrealistic

Re: Standardized testing needed to ensure proper education; letter to the editor, Oct. 18.

The delightfully presented but intellectually flawed arguments of letter-writer Annette Yuen simply fail to include reality.

All students, she must realize, do not compete equally in such tests; they don't all come from happy, stable homes; they don't receive the same support; they don't share the same culture or background; they don't have wealthy parents to pay for tutors or extra lessons.

Ms Yuen contradicts herself when claiming tax credits to parents of private and religious school students cannot be an incentive to switch public school students to private schools, then claims, hey, if they do, that's good for competition, isn't it?

Ms Yuen knows all this, yet she espouses the right-wing theory that competition, even if unfair, produces the best and shoves the rest to the wall; the powerful rule and the weak and helpless, well, they somehow survive.

Ms Yuen's theory (an internal contradiction) was espoused years ago by Tory bully and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. It was totally rejected by Oxford University when that august body refused to award her an honorary degree stating, "she had done deep and systematic damage to the whole public system of education in Britain from the provision to the youngest child up to the most advanced research programs". What

a stunning condemnation.

No doubt someday Ms Yuen and those now mourning the departure of Tory bully and Ontario Premier Mike Harris, whose equally right-wing, competitive policies will finance socially destructive private and religious training schools, must intellectually accept the same conclusions as the great academic powerhouse of Oxford University.

JAMES P.B. KELLY
MARKHAM

Thanks to all who helped with train station rededication

The Markham Village Conservancy would like to thank all those who shared in the Grand Rededication of the Markham Village Train Station festivities Saturday, Sept. 15.

It was gratifying to see so many people out to ride the Heritage Train of the York-Durham Heritage Railway, watch the official ribbon cutting and enjoy hotdogs, cake and tea.

Our deepest appreciation goes to Gail Koidis of Avonlea Decorating for her tasteful choice of colours on the interior of the station. She has created a feeling of warmth and timelessness within the walls of this heritage site.

The community is invited to drop by and see the results of the last five years and keep this facility in mind if they need a meeting place.

DIANNE MORE
MARKHAM VILLAGE CONSERVANCY

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

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