

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

No arguments on cop budget increase

York Regional Police Chief Bob Middaugh didn't have much of a fight for dollars at the regional budget table this year.

The police budget, which amounts to more than \$103 million this year, focuses on today's hot button issues in recognizing we want protection from threats once considered outside the realm of probability — from terrorists on the other side of the world to organized crime infiltrating our neighbourhoods to grow marijuana in hydroponic labs and carjack SUVs.

Regional politicians nodded their heads in agreement and allocated the cash.

The budget is up 10.4 per cent over last year's total of \$93.6 million, representing the largest single departmental increase in the region's \$1.2-billion budget.

(The overall increase for regional taxpayers is 2.3 per cent, or about \$32 on the tax bill.)

The bottom line? Policing in York Region will cost you \$130 this year. It's not a bad investment for the return.

In the past year, York Regional Police undertook or completed several projects that benefited the community. For instance, the force expanded its anti-bullying programs, school safety patrols, safe surfing programs, safe schools protocols and student Crime Stoppers.

The force held community forums throughout the region to listen to policing concerns and issues from a diverse group of citizens.

And the force has launched or is in the process of launching new units, including hate crimes, legal support, search and rescue and property crimes.

What will the budget increase mean?

The force will hire 30 new officers, 24 of them for the front line, and 28 civilians to meet increased demand.

A heavy emphasis will be placed on intelligence gathering as the force battles terrorism threats and hate crimes. Organized crime, including biker gangs and drug-growing operations, have also been identified by the community as high priorities for police to address.

With the combination of new styles of policing necessary to face new challenges and rapid regional growth, there was no other alternative but to allocate the funds.

No arguments over money here.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Box Grove land swap puts development on prime farmland

When I first saw the Ontario government's ad in your paper Jan. 15 regarding the lands on Hwy. 407 and Ninth Line in Box Grove, I was shocked. I knew these lands were under threat.

I, along with many others, have expressed concern to the municipal, provincial and federal government in regards to these lands, which have been owned by the Catholic Cemetery Board since 1979.

Later that same morning, I came across another Government of Ontario ad, this time on page 19 of the Toronto Star. This ad concerns land at Steeles Avenue and Reesor Road.

This land is to be swapped to accommodate urban sprawl on prime agricultural land. It will also encroach upon Rouge Park and the Rouge River.

Environment degradation is something I have come to expect from our elected officials, whose campaigns, I believe, are paid for by developers. But I dread to believe this is how the Catholic church would have itself portrayed.

I have personally heard Markham Mayor Don Cousens say we would be fools to pave our foodlands, yet a cemetery is OK?

I have also heard him say no development east of the Little Rouge River, yet that is where he is willing to place a 170-acre cemetery. As far as I'm concerned, a cemetery is development; it is a business.

I believe the Harris government knows it will not win the next election, therefore, it is selling off public land, preferably to its developer friends.

As a member of the Catholic church, I sincerely hope this is not something the church would partake in.

BERNADETTE MANNING
MARKHAM

Thanks for supporting Stouffville high school student art show

The senior art students of Stouffville District Secondary School appreciate the community support for their Images 2001 art exhibit this year.

Latham Gallery's Bud Sanderson and Maura Broadhurst were very helpful in teaching the students how to organize, hang their works and create a very successful show.

Thanks to Tim Hortons and A&P for the food and Lindy's Florist for the flower centrepiece on opening night Jan. 11.

The Stouffville Lions Club supported the young artists, presenting awards to Marco Bucci for computer graphics, Pam Price for painting, Julie Rennie for photography and Thai Muir for sculpture.

The exhibit continues at the Latham Gallery, 6276 Main St. in Stouffville, until Feb. 4.

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David Teetzel

Transit associations help put more riders on public system

If you drive through a business park in southern York Region, you will see tall, gleaming office towers isolated in a vast sea of parking lots.

If you pull on to one of those commercial addresses around 9 a.m. on a weekday, you'll quickly discover those parking lots aren't nearly vast enough.

Employees are dueling over spots, applying the principles of creative parking or are circling pathetically around the packed lot waiting for somebody to leave.

When I used to drop my wife at work, I would wonder how every employee at these factories could afford a car at the wages these places paid.

Recently she has been trying to find a job where she could commute by public transit. It has become clear, for most jobs in York Region, a car is not an option, it's a necessity.

Much has been made of the region's five-year, \$1-billion transit plan and there's no question we need to provide more regular service to and from more places if we are to have a workable transit system.

But what may be just as important is a concept discussed recently in Markham and currently being applied in Vaughan.

Transportation management associations are partnerships between governments and business to get more employees to and from work.

The only one currently operating in York Region is the Black Creek Transportation Management Association, which crosses the border between Vaughan and Toronto in the general vicinity of York University. The organization has only five member businesses, but since one of them is the university, it represents approximately 60,000 commuters.

Although it's a relatively new group — and one of its principal objectives is to encourage a Spadina subway extension — it is doing its part to encourage carpooling.

But the trick of transportation management associations is they use their clout to get routes changed.

If a group of businesses in one area — the business centres along Hwy. 7 and Warden Avenue and Hwy. 404 are being touted as likely spots — can dangle a few thousand regular passengers in the face of the regional transit system, they will have an excellent chance of dictating the bus routes.

But wait. Should a cartel of businesses be able to influence public transit routes to promote more development?

Of course, they should. It's all about putting more people on public transit and allowing traffic to move in areas that are now gridlocked. For businesses, it's about improving life for employees and freeing up valuable development land.

It's hard to find a downside.

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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