

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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## EDITORIAL

York takes leading role  
in affordable housing

Despite little promise of cash from Queen's Park, York Region released a strategy this week to create affordable housing for the more than 5,000 people on waiting lists.

And recognizing there's a desperate shortage of affordable housing from Vaughan to Georgina, the region has initiated a close-to-home plan involving the private sector, non-profit agencies and municipal co-operation.

The strategy calls for each municipality's endorsement — let's hope each mayor will pass along their stamp of approval to councillors — and involves two phases.

The first will be to make better use of units already in existence and to work with each of its nine towns to integrate mixed housing developments in future proposals.

Legislation to ensure this happens will keep the plan on course.

With these moves, it is clear York Region is taking the lead in providing a healthy mix of housing in its growth plans and this shows dedication to keeping our communities among the top places in Canada to live.

The region's successes, so far, include:

- Reducing development charges to builders who offer lower-priced housing;
- Offering the lowest tax rates in the GTA to developers committed to building a mix of housing in a single plan;
- Providing financial incentives to builders willing to develop housing in core areas; and,
- Building or creating at least 100 units each year.

And the region is not slouching on that commitment. It is already working on three projects, including 60 units in Vaughan.

While this is a positive first step, the region knows it must take the heat off municipal taxpayers.

"(This plan) must be supported by more than just the municipal property tax base. The region will call on senior levels of government to provide new support to increase the availability of affordable housing," the strategy report states.

It doesn't appear that will happen any time soon, however, as Finance Minister Janet Ecker's budget contained no funding for affordable housing.

The region appears to have embraced its new responsibilities and is proving a made-in-York solution, indeed, may work.

## 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.

Write: Letters to the Editor,  
9 Heritage Rd.,  
Markham, Ont., L3P 1M3  
Email: letters@econsun.com

## OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Flippant comment belies serious  
nature of World Youth Day event

Re: *World Youth Day cross comes to Unionville parish, June 13.*

I was distressed your excellent story on the World Youth Day celebrations should end with the rather flippant quote, "We have guys that come because there are girls who will be in tank tops."

Our church was honoured to be asked to help carry the cross on its journey around Unionville June 15.

We were the church to launch it on its journey from the sanctuary of St. Justin Martyr Church. Some 1,000 people joined in that mini-pilgrimage.

Tank tops or whatever, the love of Christ extends to all people. To gaze at Him and consider his love for us will fill us with the greatest love of all.

REV. RALPH GARBE  
CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH  
UNIONVILLE

Jesse Gray loved and respected by  
many in Whitchurch-Stouffville

Re: *Newspaper's coverage of biker funeral inappropriate, letter to the editor by Percy Barber, June 20.*

It was absolutely necessary to run Jesse Gray's funeral in The Economist & Sun/Tribune. Jess was loved and respected by

many of the people in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The article was not about the Hell's Angels. A young man was murdered — that is the point.

Coverage of the funeral was about people showing their respects to a friend, not about biker gangs.

Furthermore, who are you to say that the eulogy was hypocritical? You did not know Jess; he was a great guy with a big heart.

The article was not about district pride; it was about saying goodbye to a member of the community who will be greatly missed.

KATJA GERSTUNG  
STOUFFVILLE

As other ecosystems disappear,  
value of moraine increases

Lush swamps, clean lakes, rolling hills and plenty of forestry can all be found in the Oak Ridges Moraine.

These ecosystems provide homes for animals that migrate and move into the moraine because of habitat destruction elsewhere. Their homes are being destroyed for roads, houses and new communities.

In the future, many ecosystems in Canada might disappear. Therefore the moraine should be protected so that, in the future, children will see what natural ecosystems are like.

ARIC WU  
MILLIKEN MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Debora Kelly

Wambacks fight  
for victims' rights

They relive that horrific night, over and over again, every time a child in Canada is brutally beaten or murdered.

Rather than doing their utmost to avoid that agony, Joe, Lozanne and Jon Wamback have dedicated themselves to helping the victims whose lives have been inexorably altered by violence.

You might think repeatedly plunging themselves back into that nightmarish time must help them cope with the changes in their lives since Jon, then 15, was viciously beaten June 29, 1999, soon falling into a coma that left him barely clinging to life.

But Mr. Wamback brushes aside any suggestion his family's passionate advocacy for victims' rights is part of their own healing process. "There is no such thing as closure for families of murdered children or seriously injured (children).

"The pain, the panic, is still as intense ... You never move on."

Even though it takes a toll on them, when the Wambacks learn of another heartbreaking tragedy, the Newmarket family is compelled to get involved.

Mr. Wamback cites a litany of names, young people, lying in hospital beds, some in graves, as a result of assaults by youths. On weekends, they visit families, offering advice and the tangible support so lacking in the justice system.

It is, perhaps, Jon who offers the most comfort by his presence at a time when hope is at its dimmest for these families.

Now, Jon, who has made "unbelievable" progress, is attending high school and playing golf with his dad again.

"We feel we are the luckiest family in Canada because Jon is still with us," Mr. Wamback says, his voice deepening.

In January 2000, with Jon continuing his rehabilitation, the Wambacks launched a campaign to strengthen the Young Offenders Act; backed by a petition of 400,000 supporters. Today, the petition has one million signatures.

Of the three teens charged with aggravated assault in Jon's assault, two were found guilty and sentenced to a year in jail; the third was acquitted.

The Wambacks, joined by the Baranovskis and McGloans, whose sons were murdered, rose to national prominence in the bid to ensure youths face real consequences for breaking the law.

While still active in that endeavour, the Wambacks have emerged as passionate advocates of victims' rights.

"I would like the victims of crimes to have the same rights as criminals," he says strongly.

"Once you become a victim of crime, you essentially become a non-citizen. You have no rights and no one to help you. We find ourselves falling into that role.

"We're not trying to take away the rights from the accused, but all we want to do is give rights to victims. We're just trying to create balance in our society," Mr. Wamback continues.

## Stouffville Tribune

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