

Stouffville Tribune

Serving the community since 1888

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITORIAL

Homeless youth
a grim reality
we must address

It's a common — and, perhaps, understandable — perception York Region isn't plagued by homelessness.

It's rare, indeed, to see a bedraggled figure sleeping in a doorway or panhandling on one of our quiet Main Streets.

Or is it simply we don't want to see the problem, as we drive by obliviously in our SUVs?

If you looked in the parks, woodlots and abandoned buildings at night, you might begin to see the human face of the problem.

There are, according to the experts, about 500 homeless people in York Region — a hidden minority in our mostly affluent communities of 729,773.

Yet, disturbingly, more than half our homeless are under age 25.

Youth seeking shelter from the streets of York Region have two choices: a 12-bed shelter for young men in Newmarket or the hard-scrabble shelters in downtown Toronto. Instead, they choose streets, alleys and parks.

Cash-strapped Home Base, a Yonge Street drop-in centre for youth in Richmond Hill, is lobbying to create the region's first youth shelter.

Since opening its doors in June 2000, the centre has been overwhelmed by the number of young people who have turned to its services. Of the 100 new youths visiting each month, the centre workers estimate 70 per cent of them are or have been homeless.

When the centre closes at 8 p.m., grim reality kicks in for many: they are sleeping in the alcove behind Home Base.

Can we shrug our shoulders when young people are sleeping in the streets? Simply ask, "Where are their parents?" After all, we have our hands full caring for our own children.

Can we turn our backs on youth in crisis when there is an opportunity to turn a life around?

What's needed before the problem spirals out of control are educational outreach programs, assistance in obtaining job training and employment, both transitional and long-term living programs and health care designed for and directed at homeless youth.

But it's an enormous challenge to provide more services in this historically underserved but rapidly growing region.

A regional report shows York Region consistently lagging behind other GTA municipalities in funding levels for such services as hospitals, public health, long-term care and community mental health.

While politicians battle for their fair share of the funding pot, agencies in social service sectors are working together to use their limited resources more efficiently.

In the meantime, the rest of us must do our part by placing more emphasis on the value and importance of the family in society.

OPINION

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debra Kelly
BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruk
DIRECTOR, MARKETING
& NEW PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT
Brenda Larson

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR,
RETAIL & FLYER SALES
Nicole Mathieu
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR,
CLASSIFIED, REAL ESTATE
& EVENTS MANAGEMENT
Gord Paolucci



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ignorance of teaching common

Re: *What could possibly be tiring out York public board teachers?*, letter by J. Shaw, Sept. 7.

Although I drive a car and some years ago took a course in auto mechanics, I do not understand the complexities of my car's engine. Mr. Shaw is in a similar situation with teaching. Ignorance of the complexities of teaching today is commonplace.

I invite Mr. Shaw to teach at my school for one week to find out why teachers are tired.

Mr. Shaw would be able to plan units in seven or eight subjects. Prior to teaching reading, I would expect him to be familiar with assessment and evaluation techniques, prepare appropriate rubrics and understand the characteristics of each of the levels.

If Mr. Shaw is unfamiliar with the developmental reading assessment program we could arrange for in-servicing (on his own time).

Is he familiar with how books are levelled in the primary grades? What exactly is the difference between a level 10 and a level 18 book? If the books haven't been levelled for him, he can do that on his own time, too.

Perhaps Mr. Shaw would prepare and teach the Grade 4 unit on plate tectonics. (He may have studied that in Grade 11, as I did.) He may not have material for what he is about to teach but he can develop that on his own time. Marking should be completed promptly.

Some of Mr. Shaw's students receive special education support for one period per day but

The Economist & Sun/Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Economist & Sun/Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor, 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3, e-mail letters@econsun.com

are with him the rest and require individual help.

Statistically, he can expect one of his students will have attention deficit disorder and approximately half (in the Toronto District School Board) speak English as a second language.

What adaptations will Mr. Shaw make to his program to account for these students who require additional support?

Classroom management techniques should take into account not all of his students want to be at school, some are not concentrating because parents are divorcing, some regularly come to school hungry and some are abused.

Can Mr. Shaw recognize a child who is abused or neglected? Is he familiar with the legal requirements and reporting procedures for abused children? (Sadly, this is much more prevalent than he might expect.)

Teachers want to do the best job they can and yet face incessant criticism. Maybe it's the disrespect that makes teachers so tired.

WAYNE HAMILTON
MARKHAM



Dave Teetzel

We can't get rid of
skilled workers

Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve...

— Dr. Martin Luther King

Kids are dropping out of school. Some are homeless. Some are turning to crime. And you can never find a plumber when you need one.

A fledgling campaign to establish a trade and technical school, along the lines of Toronto's Central Tech, is hoping you'll see a connection.

Recent education reforms have raised standards and put an emphasis on becoming more competitive in the knowledge-based economy.

But for those who aren't academically inclined, it has been an exercise in frustration. Fact is, some people are better at working with their hands than they are at book learning.

What's more, Canada needs their skills. According to a 2001 study, 15,000 workers are needed to stabilize Ontario's construction labour market.

York Region's school boards are responding. For example, the public board participates in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship program, which blends curriculum requirements with on-the-job training.

But to get into a co-op or apprenticeship, a student must pass Grade 10.

With the elimination of the basic level last year, students are forced to study at a level geared to community college or university. But what if you're just not getting it? Grades 9 and 10 could seem like an eternity.

"It's as if we're writing off a whole group of kids," says Diane Mandell of Second Chance, an agency that teaches basic life skills to teenagers who are out of school and unemployed.

She is asking Human Resources Development Canada to help establish a York Region school that offers trade training alongside academics.

Right now, students looking for these opportunities might be steered to the youth apprenticeship program, the Ontario Skills Passport (offered at the Catholic board) or a construction training centre in Vaughan run by a trade union.

But Ms Mandell casts a jealous eye at schools such as Bendale in Scarborough, which offer a diverse training program for good, in-demand jobs, and wonders why York Region can't have something similar.

Perhaps one obstacle is public attitudes. York Region has a high concentration of university-educated professionals. It's natural to want your children to follow in your footsteps.

But we need to understand people have different talents and all are valuable.

EDITORIAL

Editor Jim Mason
newsroom@econsun.com

ADVERTISING

Retail Sales Manager

Steve Kane
stevek@theliberall.com

Sales Manager, New Business

Development & Distribution

Dawna Andrews

dandrews@erabanner.com

Classified Manager Ann Campbell

annc@erabanner.com

Real Estate Manager

Mike Rogerson

PRODUCTION

Electronic Communications

Manager John Futhiey

jfuthiey@yrg.com

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution Manager Barry Black

bblack@erabanner.com

ADMINISTRATION

Office Manager Vivian O'Neil

voneil@econsun.com

York Region Events

Managing Director

Debra Weller

dweller@yrg.com

Shows Manager

Stacey Allen

sallen@yrg.com

York Region Printing

General Manager Bob Dean

bdean@yrg.com

EDITORIAL

905-294-2200 /

Fax: 294-1538

ADVERTISING

294-2200 / Classified: 1-800-

743-3353 / Fax: 853-1765

DISTRIBUTION

905-294-8244

Circulation Audit

Ontario Press Council

Board Member

Stouffville Tribune

A York Region Newspaper Group

community newspaper

The Stouffville Tribune, published every

Thursday and Saturday, is a member of the

Metroland Printing, Publishing and

Distributing Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary

of Forstar Corporation. Metroland is

comprised of 70 community publications

across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper

Group includes The Liberal, serving

Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan

Citizen, Markham Economist & Sun,

Stouffville Tribune, Stouffville Sun, Georgina

Advocate, York Region Business Times, At

Home, Good Life, yorkregion.com and

York Region Printing