

## Stouffville Tribune

Serving the community since 1856  
A Metroland community newspaper  
9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ont. L3P 1M3

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

### LETTERS to the EDITOR

#### Many homeless have jobs, but can't afford accommodation

*Re: Why go to university with shelters available?, letter to the editor by Jeff Schwalm, Oct. 5.*  
Mr. Schwalm should go to university because as far as I can tell, he does not have a serious health problem (i.e. an addiction, mental illness), he has the necessary prerequisites such as housing, adequate food and income, and he wants a good job (one that pays a lot more than minimum wage).

A number of people who were living in Toronto's Tent City and shelters do work, yet they cannot find affordable housing. Further, many more of them have serious health problems and lack a number of prerequisites for work such as housing, adequate food and income.

Mr. Schwalm's advice to the people of Tent City, "Get off your lazy butt, go out and find a job", is similar to the remark made by Alberta Premier Ralph Klein on an early-morning visit to a men's shelter in Edmonton not so long ago.

Subsequent news stories said Mr. Klein had been drinking, not that 50 per cent of these men were working.

My advice to Mr. Schwalm is to spend some time with people who are homeless.

Hopefully, they will give him an education that will show him the way to becoming, as Jean Vanier says, "more fully human".

ELAINE WALSH  
UNIONVILLE

#### Government should ensure hay mazes are safe, properly staffed

*This is an edited version of a letter sent to the Ontario Fire Marshal's office.*

On Sunday, Oct. 6, Markham fire and emergency services responded to an incident at Whittamore's Berry Farm on Steeles Avenue in east Markham.

Upon arrival, the firefighters established that 80 of 160 bales of straw were burning and up to 20 persons were being evacuated by the owner and members of his staff.

During the evacuation, firefighters were told the bales of straw were positioned to form a maze.

During my discussions with the owner, Frank Whittamore, he informed me many members of the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketers Association provide mazes similar to his for the entertainment of customers.

Many of these mazes are constructed using farm products such as straw. At the end of the season, the straw is used as winter cover for strawberries and other plants.

After reviewing the Ontario Fire Code and speaking with Kevin Kelly of your office, we concluded the fire code provisions do not apply.

# OPINION

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It was a thrill for my son, Jack, to be able to sit in a fire truck. Thank you for all of the hard work that went into organizing such an event.

SHEILA DUCHECK  
MARKHAM

#### Markham's traffic problems will keep me from visiting again

*Re: Traffic deaths double in York Region; Sept. 28.*

The other week when attending a conference in Markham, I read this article, in which York Regional Police Chief Robert Middaugh attributes some of the accidents to bad driving.

Actually, the fatigue and boredom of driving due to the proliferation of automobiles contributes mightily to the number of accidents. Signs along some highways in Canada proclaim, "Fatigue Kills."

I had looked forward to a visit to Markham as a respite from automobiles that I encounter daily in Detroit, but Markham was no pleasure. I would not visit again even if you paid me.

RALPH SLOVENKO  
PROFESSOR OF LAW, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

#### Monarchy important to keep, despite politician's comments

As prime minister, Brian Mulroney was accused of taking Canada too close to the United States.

Recent comments by Deputy Prime Minister John Manley make it quite clear he would like nothing better than to see Canada move even closer.

Manley's ill-timed remarks, in French, were no surprise to many people. But I would suggest to Mr. Manley that he stands a much greater chance of winning the Super 7 lottery than having his dream regarding the monarchy come true.

This great country was born out of a dominion and removing the monarchy would be no simple task.

First, the Constitution would have to be amended. Since all the provinces and territories would have to agree to the change, this is not likely to happen, if past experiences are any yardstick.

As well, we could not agree on the Charlottetown and Meech Lake accords.

My advice to Mr. Manley, Economist & Sun/Tribune news editor Frank King and those other would-be republicans is don't hold your breath on this one.

If I did not defend the monarchy, I would be breaking faith with those wonderful veterans whose lives are ebbing away in places like Sunnybrook Health Centre and for those thousands of brave men and women who fought for king/queen and country and now lie in foreign fields.

JOHN SHAW  
MARKHAM

The Markham fire and emergency services request the following safety concerns be addressed:

- There are no emergency exits provided; once in, the only way out is through the field — if the maze is cut out of the field — or the person must work his way back to the starting point if bales are used.

In this instance, the maze was not overly large and those in it returned to the starting point or climbed over the top of the bales to escape.

- Combustibility of the product during the growing season is negligible. However, when harvest time comes, the moisture content is at its minimum and the probability of a fire is much greater.

Combustibility or the use of non-combustible materials must be addressed to prevent the loss of life or injury to those who visit or work at these venues.

- Most operators do not have fire-extinguishing equipment or an adequate water supply available to slow down the spread of fire or extinguish it prior to the fire department's arrival.

- Most operators do not have a plan in place to evacuate the persons in the maze if an emergency does exist, thus placing these people at risk.

- Some of these mazes are operate during the evening hours, which, again, creates potential for additional safety issues.

Where necessary illuminated exit signs

and/or paths of exit travel shall be provided.

- Controlling smoking materials and ignition sources.

- The temporary installation of electrical wiring, equipment and fixtures.

- Fire watch or supervisory staff should be in place at all times.

Because of the popularity and continued growth of these "agri-tainment" facilities, the fire service, along with your office and/or the government, should develop new legislation or, at a minimum, produce safety guidelines.

SCOTT RICHARDSON  
CHIEF FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER  
TOWN OF MARKHAM

#### Thanks to fire department for well-organized open house

I wanted to thank Markham fire and emergency services for an excellent open house at the Main Street, Markham station last weekend celebrating National Fire Prevention Week.

It was well organized, informative and fun. It was a great opportunity for the community to see the fire hall and trucks and to meet some of the people who protect our community.

Everyone was very friendly and inviting. The barbecue was a delicious surprise, with plenty of hamburgers and hotdogs.

### LETTERS POLICY

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

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