

# OPINION

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## Editorial

### Nurses need more than pat on back

This year, more than ever, we have good reason to celebrate National Nursing Week.

This week, which coincides with Florence Nightingale's birthday, communities in Canada, the United States and other nations celebrate the many contributions made by nurses.

For the past month or so, we have seen nurses standing on the frontlines of the SARS battle, putting in long hours, offering patients kindness, compassion and support despite their own well-founded fears about becoming infected.

After hearing their harrowing accounts of watching colleagues come down with a mysterious disease, of working 12-hour shifts in uncomfortable masks and gloves and of facing quarantines that kept them locked in their homes outside work hours, it's amazing only five GTA-area nurses were reported as resigning as a result of the situation. We heard the stories first-hand from the many nurses in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Hospitals were caught short-staffed when, in an attempt to contain the spread of SARS, they stopped staff from working at multiple hospitals.

According to a survey by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, 43 per cent of the province's nurses are either part-time or casual workers. In many cases, that isn't by choice — about 11 per cent would gladly take a full-time job if one were available.

Many of these nurses are working three or four jobs to make ends meet — without receiving benefits.

It's no wonder we have a shortage of nurses in Ontario. Our nursing graduates are going south of the border to find full-time work, flexible scheduling and a fair wage. This stems from the hospital restructuring imposed by the Tories in the mid-'90s, when many nurses were forced out of full-time jobs.

While Premier Ernie Eves is promising to create another 8,000 nursing positions in the next three years, filling those positions might be difficult unless hospitals can offer competitive contracts with neighbouring jurisdictions.

While it's fine to celebrate Nurses Week with gifts, events and warm, fuzzy sentiments, what our nurses really deserve are working conditions befitting the skill, dedication and courage they have already demonstrated.



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### End of Victoria Day era at ballpark

The ball parks of Stouffville Memorial Park won't know what to do with themselves this long weekend.

No big men in short pants dinging softballs with aluminum bats, then hoisting aluminum cans. No high hops through the pebbled infield. No beer garden.

For 20 Victoria Day weekends, the Stouffville Raiders hosted an adult softball tournament on the diamonds of the downtown Stouffville park.

Not anymore. The Raiders are your neighbours. Young to now middle-aged Stouffville guys playing competitive slo-pitch in a weekly league and at weekend tournaments.

The last edition of the Raiders' tourney was played last May 2-4 weekend. It died with competitive men's slo-pitch in this town. For almost two decades, the York-Durham Men's Slo-pitch League flourished here. No more.

"When the league died last year, so did our team," said Raider Murray Pattenden.

"Plus, interest in slo-pitch in general was dropping. The younger guys in Stouffville aren't picking it up."

Mr. Pattenden and the Raiders alumni wonder about the lost revenue from this weekend. The town won't receive its diamond rental fees.

Local taverns, motels and restaurants will miss the 20 to 30 teams of adults from across Ontario, their entourage and their disposable income.

Not to mention the community work the Raiders did with some of the money they made at their tourney. They built the scorers' booths at the Memorial Park diamonds, sponsored a youth softball team and donated cash to other worthy local causes.

Some of the Raiders joined teams in Uxbridge league. Others play in the more laid-back Monday Night Men's League in Stouffville. Others hung it up for good.

"Still, old habits die hard. Some of us will still get together this weekend," said Mr. Pattenden. "Just to celebrate."

It wouldn't be Victoria Day without them.

Jim Mason is editor of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

## Letters to the Editor

### Council-approved development will destroy Stouffville paradise

I write this on a beautiful May morning. I am sitting on my deck in west-end Stouffville looking north.

The field is scattered with corn stalks and the newly arrived Canada geese stop for breakfast. I hear a cardinal calling its mate. In the distance, I see a deer. I am so happy it survived another winter.

Later today, my husband and the dog will go to the pond at the far side of this field. The dog will have her first swim of the season. My husband will see the marsh marigolds, hear the blackbirds and identify the tracks around the pond.

Five years from now, all of this will be gone. The fields will be full of ugly, identical monster house boxes. Our Country Close to the City will be no different than the monotonous rows of big box dwellings that have invaded the fields and forests of the 7th and 8th concessions to the south in Markham.

Birds will go further north, the deer will be dead and the pond a sewer.

This is the proud legacy of Mayor Wayne Emmerson and his Whitchurch-Stouffville council. This is what I will remember of their tenure.

Fresh water, trees and fields are what made Elm Road and the rest of Stouffville so attractive to my husband and I when we moved here 34 years ago. Development sanctioned and encouraged by Mayor Emmerson and his

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councillors and executed by Madori Development and their counterparts are the agents of death that have killed our paradise.

**DAPHNE GOLDMAN**  
STOUFFVILLE

### Sense of community reinforced

Last weekend, my family went to the park on Hicketwood Boulevard in Stouffville and forgot our video camera. We returned to the park only to discover that it was not there.

Thinking the worse had happened to our family memories, we made a second trip to see if anyone had left a note saying he had found it when we met Ken Ferguson. This gentleman was kind enough to take it home overnight and then turn it in at the York Regional Police station in Markham.

Certainly, he didn't have to run it out to Markham but he took time from his Sunday morning and, in turn, absolutely made our day. There is such a sense of community in Stouffville and I encounter it every day. This is just another example of how neighbours look out for neighbours. Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

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