

OPINION

PUBLISHER: IAN PROUDFOOT
 TELEPHONE: 905-640-2612 • FAX: 905-640-8778
 Email: jmason@ymg.com website: www.yorkregion.com

Editorial

Richmond Hill officials should be ashamed

Richmond Hill residents continue to enjoy a luxury no other homeowners in York Region have — and it stinks.

It seems the town's antiquated trash limit of 10 bags each week per household — which, in itself, is ridiculous considering the problems York is facing trying to dispose of 140,000 tonnes of garbage each year — was scaled back to five bags this week.

At first, council wanted to drop the limit to three bags and add a \$2 tag fee for each additional bag.

But, this week, councillors changed their stand and voted for a five-bag limit with no user fees.

To most York Region residents, taking five bags of trash to the curb every week would seem almost criminal, especially since the region's disposal bill is expected to double to nearly \$13 million this year.

In fact, trash collection represents the biggest increase in spending in the region's budget.

It's puzzling why councillors in one of York's largest, most populated and progressive communities felt the need to ignore or deflate efforts to reduce trash.

York Region chief administrative officer Michael Garrett should step up his proposal to charge everyone for every bag of trash placed at the curb.

Look no further than Georgina's success at achieving a nearly 50-per-cent diversion rate with its now-defunct buck-a-bag program.

With York Region's population growing at about 6,000 houses a year and with more than 812,000 people, York could bring in more than \$12 million a year with a regionwide user-pay trash plan.

Councillor Brenda Hogg, the sole politician in Richmond Hill to stick to her guns and vote for a three-bag limit, said it's the residents who are calling for a trash reduction.

"The public wants this done. The public is leading us on this... it's the right time and you don't need an auction on this," she said.

Her fellow councillors, however, said going below five bags could lead to illegal dumping.

The City of Vaughan is another community that should be ashamed for not enforcing a bag limit on trash. Does the word dump ring a bell?

Both communities, or more accurately, their leaders, should be ashamed.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Breaking news? Not all hospital care covered by Ernie Eves

The zenith of my athletic career was being invited to try out for the varsity basketball team at university.

My Glory Days, as Bruce Springsteen called them, would be measured in minutes. A ripped-up ankle during the first scrimmage sent me to the ER.

The hospital sent me home with a cast, crutches and some fine mind-numbing pharmaceuticals, all at no direct cost to me. (And the plaster attached to my leg became a great way to meet women; but that's another column.)

Zoom forward, *Back to the Future* style, to the next generation of Masons. Our nine-year-old daughter, Jennifer, pulled a similar sports feat while high-jumping during the Victoria Day weekend.

After clearing the bar, she missed the landing pad. Her foot hit the grass and snapped like a stale pretzel.

Down the Ninth Line to Markham Stouffville Hospital, an institution I know and love, we go.

Twenty-five years after taking that first visit to the cast room, more than the masks worn by the friendly ER staffers was new.

"Would you like to pay for that now or wait until you're invoiced?" was the parting message.

"Pay for what?" you'd say if you, too, haven't used the health system lately. "What is this, Florida?"

To read our bill Mastercard style:

- Synthetic casting: \$80;
- Boot (for foot): \$22;
- Crutches: \$39.

Ontario health-care system — priceless!

"Most people's health plan covers the cast," we were told.

Hospital officials say there are a variety of cast styles, including a model completely covered by OHIP, but we weren't offered that model.

And extra fees have been charged in hospitals and doctors offices for several years, they say.

Get shipped to hospital by ambulance and it will cost you \$45. You'll also pay for work deemed cosmetic, including having a boil lanced.

Getting that vasectomy reversed, pal? You'll pay Ernie Eves for the privilege.

Ouch — twice!

Jim Mason is editor of the *Stouffville Sun*.

Letters to the Editor

Stouffville Secondary students deserve better school facilities

I recently met with York Region District School Board chairperson Bill Crothers regarding the deplorable conditions of our only high school, Stouffville District Secondary School. He informed me of the enormous budget and capital upgrade pressures facing him and his fellow trustees, focusing on the growth demands facing the school board.

At the end of the meeting, I supplied him with pictures showing the unacceptable conditions. He seemed very taken aback by these pictures and said he would meet with the principal and find out why some of these repairs aren't being done. That was the last I heard.

I can't believe the York Region school board has plans for a \$30-million elite sport school in Markham.

In the meantime, our children are supposed to face antiquated class conditions on a daily basis at SDSS.

When it comes to our children's education, the status quo is no longer an option. There is basically nothing wrong with elite sport schools being built, but there is something wrong when children in Ontario are provided with a lower standard of educational facilities than in surrounding areas. Chairperson Crothers and his fellow trustees are treating our children as second-class citizens.

We as taxpayers in Whitchurch-Stouffville, whose children have not been afforded the elite facilities as other schools, demand the York

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board improve our school to the standards of other areas in York Region for 2003.

I feel it is time our school council stands up for what is rightly ours. Desk, chairs, lockers, computer labs, running track repairs and sports equipment should be the board's first priority at SDSS.

We are tired of being ignored while other areas receive all the upgrades. It is time our school officials became accountable to the hard-working taxpayers of Whitchurch-Stouffville. We need a higher standard of facilities for a better education in Stouffville.

We are not prepared to accept a Band-Aid solution. We want full major improvements to our school.

I ask parents to stand up and tell Mr. Crothers and director Bill Hogarth we are tired of all the elite, special and upgraded schools going to the south of us.

It is time to have a voice or it will be your children in elementary school now who will be welcomed in the same antiquated facility five to 10 years from now.

COUNCILLOR SUE SHERBAN
 WARD 6
 WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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34 Civic Ave., 3rd Floor, Stouffville, Ontario L4A 7Z5

Phone: 905-640-2612 • Fax: 905-640-8778

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Website: www.yorkregion.com • Email: jmason@ymg.com

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