

OPINION

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Editorial

Too long to confirm tests

It's hard not to feel sorry for the owners of Cedar Beach Park.

They say they'll lose \$150,000 because of a false report of West Nile virus this year. It's not fair.

The trouble started June 23, when York Region announced preliminary tests on mosquitoes in a pool near the campground at Aurora Road and the Ninth Line in Whitchurch-Stouffville, showed positive for the West Nile virus.

It was announced as the first positive test in Ontario this year.

Problem was, it was a false alarm.

But before that could be confirmed, a flood of cancellations poured in at Cedar Beach. The facility is one of the largest summer trailer parks in the Toronto area. Many people spend the entire summer there.

Twenty-two days after the preliminary West Nile tests were released as positive, more extensive tests conducted in Winnipeg proved the mosquitoes weren't infected.

That was too late for the Davies family, which has owned Cedar Beach for 75 years. Now, the family is asking why.

Why did York Region officials release preliminary test results? Why not wait for confirmation?

Imagine if the region had kept quiet, then received confirmation three weeks later the disease was in the neighbourhood. People, particularly customers of the camp, would be furious they had been exposed to a potential health threat.

This newspaper would be the first to demand an explanation, if not an apology, from the region.

The situation has caused serious damage to this business — and to the region's tourism industry at large.

Perhaps the most serious problem lies with the prolonged wait for confirmed test results.

Our public health department is taking West Nile seriously — and rightly so. But there's something wrong with the system when tests have to be sent out of province for three weeks before we can know whether West Nile is in an area.

It's time the province started investing in test labs, streamlining the process of identifying and dealing with West Nile and other diseases.

The Davies family wants the region to change its practice of announcing unconfirmed tests. It would be more practical if the tests took a day or two, instead of a week or two.

The family also wants the region to advertise that the Musselman's lake area is safe. That would be appropriate.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Northern house prices make up for pricey petrol?

A guy leaves town for two weeks and all heck breaks loose.

It wasn't bad enough to be filling the bottomless gas tank in our family's van on the north shore of Lake Superior. The same regular petrol that cost 66 cents a litre here Tuesday was 81 cents two weeks ago in Wawa.

Ouch!

Calculate that rate over two tank fills and I'm sure I could have banked enough coin to put one of the kids through university.

Turned on the radio and the CBC was reporting lineups at the corner of Stouffville Road and Warden Avenue north of Toronto. Not for the cheap gas — the closest station is a concession away.

Beef from beleaguered western ranchers was being sold at bargain basement rates in a farm field. And where was it? Fifteen hours away and headed west.

But there are benefits to life on the north side of Ontario — and we're not talking Barrie here, folks.

You won't hear a traffic report in Sudbury, Saul Ste Marie or Thunder Bay. Road congestion isn't in the northern vernacular.

Crime is. A transient was seriously beaten by five people outside a plaza in Thunder Bay last week. A neighbour was arrested in the murder of a Sudbury man.

The north may be the unofficial retirement home for aging rockers. On a tour of northern nightclubs during our vacation were Kim Mitchell, Trooper, Helix, Harlequin and Dr Hook.

Wild life? A woman was attacked by a bear outside her home on the outskirts of Thunder Bay.

We were fishing in daylight on the Ontario-Minnesota border a week ago today at 10 p.m., hauling in four-pound bass and walleye that melted in our mouths at dinner the next night.

House prices will make you drool with envy. That \$350,000 beauty in Stouffville will cost you thousands less. Starter homes in Thunder Bay can be had for less than \$100,000. Apartments for under \$500 a month abound.

But the north shares many of our southern problems. Many people are without a family doctor. West Nile virus is a concern. An election is in the works.

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune. He can be contacted at jmason@yrmg.com.

Letters to the Editor

Same-sex marriages model for world to follow

Re: *Blessing the union of Adam and Steve*, column, July 31.

I read Jim Thomas' column regarding same-sex unions with great interest. He quoted Stouffville minister Lou Geense as saying "Christianity is not the baseline by which a government runs... Canada is no longer a Christian nation..." and how this is leading to our impending doom.

Please, Jim, be wary of ideologically based, one-size-fits-all diatribes, particularly religious and political ones, such as the aforementioned. One need only look at all the problems these types of ideologies have caused: Galileo, the crusades, underfunded public health and education, America, the USSR, Iran, the Taliban, heck even the number zero. Canada is a Christian nation, as well as a Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, Jewish, agnostic, gay, black and an insert-your-pleasure-here nation. A multiplicity which is very much Trudeau-esque.

He ends his column by saying it is probable the government will unilaterally legislate churches to formalize same-sex marriages, and that if current trends continue, religious groups will have no say in the matter.

Bollocks. The federal government is not proposing this. In fact, it is proposing the state recognize same-sex marriages and religious groups be free to consecrate whatever their definition of marriage. This is a very inclusive, very progres-

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sive and very Canadian solution that will be a model for true freedom, acceptance and richness of human society, not only for Canada, but for the world.

Conversely, it is views such as Rev. Geense's that would leave many groups with no say, particularly those who do not subscribe to his flavour of Christianity.

Government-dictated morality or edicts in the name of one religion has no place in a pluralistic society, such as Canada. This idea is summed up quite nicely in the present yet still timeless words of a wonderful 1960s draft dodger ditty by Canned Heat, *Going Up The Country*.

No use in you runnin' or screamin' and cryin', 'Cause you got a home man, long as I got mine.

Finally, with respect, the "bedrooms of nation" phrase was misquoted and not, contrary to popular belief, coined by Pierre Trudeau but rather by newspaper columnist Martin O'Malley, whom Trudeau acknowledged. The correct quote is: "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation."

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