

OPINION

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Editorial

Health-care system leaves workers with few resources

The York Region public health department is slamming the federal government for not doing enough to protect Canadians from West Nile virus. We've heard this before.

Since January, our public health department has been working to protect residents from the Norwalk virus, SARS and now West Nile.

In each case, the federal government was criticized for not providing enough help to combat the viruses.

It's clear Canada's health system isn't prepared to cope with large-scale outbreaks, leaving health-care workers twisting in the wind with whatever limited resources are on hand.

Almost immediately after SARS took its grip last spring, Queen's Park advised doctors and health departments to report cases of the contagious and potentially fatal respiratory disease.

Ottawa implemented the same step under the federal Quarantine Act in mid-June.

That was well after the final outbreak was over," said Dr. Hanif Kassam, York Region's associate medical officer of health.

Canada could take a page from the United States.

In response to the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the Office of Homeland Security was established to monitor terrorist activities and prepare the U.S. for future attacks.

It's a good model for what's needed here.

With word we are likely to face more nasty viruses like SARS and Norwalk in the coming years, our health-care system must be better prepared to respond when an outbreak is suspected. Establishing better protocols — even a rapid response team — is in order.

The fact it took 22 days for a federal lab in Winnipeg to disprove a false-positive preliminary test of a suspected West Nile pool in Whitchurch-Stouffville proves further investment is needed in this area.

With the SARS death toll rising again this week and human cases of West Nile virus cropping up in Ontario, we don't need any further reminders of the need to address the shortcomings of the system.

HERE THEY COME, STOUFFVILLE

PAT WHEELER '03
 SUN-TRIBUNE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Are our kids really all right, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

About five years ago, I was cruising along Main Street on a sweltering spring weeknight when I got stopped at what was the only traffic light in downtown Stouffville.

It was about 11:30 p.m. and hotter than a sauna rock. Three lads about 14 years old appeared out of nowhere and crossed in front of my mini-van from Mill Street. A little late to be out on a school night, the dad in me said to myself:

Then 20 feet behind them appeared more pedestrians. About eight more kids, some no older than seven and the smallest without shoes or socks.

The entire group hoofed it through the CIBC parking lot, heading south toward Stouffville Memorial Park.

For some reason, the image of the smallest of those children has stuck with me as clearly as the pictures of Paul Henderson's goal or assassinated JFK.

Maybe it's because a few weeks later, vandals did considerable damage downtown and in other locations in Stouffville.

It wasn't the kids I saw. They were too small.

But I wondered what children of that age were doing out on their own. Roaming. And five years from now, would they be the kids doing the vandalism?

Where were the parents or guardians of the late-night youth strolling club?

What would they be doing in the park? Last time I checked, minor softball games ended by 8:30 p.m. and they aren't hosting all-nighters at the skate park.

That's not to say all vandalism, crime and general bad behaviour is committed by teenagers, the two in our household remind their father.

Fair enough. But you don't hear of many 60-year-olds getting busted for ripping up flower beds, spray painting church walls or smoking pot in public.

This paper carries a story of another wave of vandalism in Whitchurch-Stouffville this summer.

I hope the kids walking across Main Street five years ago weren't involved.

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for support, blood to further battle against cancer

The Fraser family would like to thank everyone in the Stouffville area for their support over the last 10 months while we battled cancer with our four-year-old Dawson.

After numerous biopsies, scans, transfusions, surgeries, intense chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant and radiation, we are happy to say Dawson is currently cancer-free.

We still have a very long road ahead of scans and biopsies as neuroblastoma tumours, after all, this treatment has a 30 to 50 per cent cure rate. We hope and pray Dawson is part of this percentage.

He certainly is a fighter. We would not have been able to be by his side without the support of everyone.

We thank everyone for their kindness and will continue the fight of our lives over the next five years, having biopsies and scans every three months and bi-weekly visits to the Hospital for Sick Children for monitoring.

A big thanks goes out to those of you who donate blood as Dawson received close to 40 transfusions and this alone was a life-saving measure.

We cannot begin to explain what we have gone through, but with the love and support from everyone, we will continue our fight against cancer.

THE FRASERS
 UXBRIDGE

E.K. DISSETTE
 STOUFFVILLE

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@ymg.com

Safety village needed now

Re: Construction of safety village under way at Bruce's Mill, July 31

It is a pity the York Region Safety Village had not been available last month.

Driving along Millard Street in Stouffville July 21, I saw about eight young children, aged about five to eight, riding their bikes on the sidewalk. They were accompanied by a teenage girl on her bike, who, I suppose, was keeping an eye on them.

However, the children raced along the sidewalk oblivious to stop signs and roared across the intersections without stopping or checking for traffic.

I cannot understand why parents of young children can't teach them the rules of the road when on their bikes, as well as have a responsible person accompany them. One teenager, trying to look after eight young children on bikes was hopelessly inadequate.

Drivers of cars should not feel responsible if these children had been injured or, heaven forbid, killed. It is usually the driver who seems to be at fault, not the parents.

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