

OPINION

PUBLISHER: IAN PROUDFOOT

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

Editorial

Beetle big problem, but not disaster

Vaughan Mayor Michael Di Biase has declared a national disaster in his city. Vaughan may need to replant as many as 2,000 healthy maple, ash, poplar and other hardwood trees the federal government must destroy in an effort to stop a spreading infestation of the Asian long-horned beetle, Mr. Di Biase told reporters last week. And he is loathe to open his coffers for the \$800,000 he estimates is required to replant the trees.

"The federal government came through for other disasters, like the Quebec ice storm," he states.

Following his reasoning, he should have declared a disaster much earlier, when the city dished out nearly \$700,000 in severance payments to senior staff who have left in the past 18 months.

"That money would certainly have come in handy in dealing with this 'national disaster'."

While the federal government is responsible for and is paying to cut down infested trees in Woodbridge, the mayor complains Ottawa should also pay to rehabilitate the barren areas left after ward under its disaster relief fund.

To suggest the infestation of the Asian long-horned beetle is on par with the devastating ice storm in Quebec or raging forest fires in British Columbia is, quite simply, laughable.

The federal government considers an event a disaster when a community is hit by a devastating and unprecedented act of nature, such as an earthquake, ice storm, fire, flood or hurricane, that ravages people's lives, homes, offices, streets and livelihood, the reparation of which is beyond the bounds of the local economy.

For Pete's sake, the feds could hardly be convinced by the province the SARS outbreak was a disaster.

Which leaves Mr. Di Biase looking like yet another local politician asking for a handout to solve his problems.

Instead of being so concerned about shifting responsibility after the fact, Vaughan could take a page from Mississauga, which has stepped up to the plate with pro-active measures.

City forestry staff are inspecting trees on public and private property in an effort to stay one step ahead of the pesky Asian bug.

Other municipalities, including all those in York Region that may very well be affected by the infestation, should undertake the same initiative as Mississauga.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Our legion much more than beer hall

In many Canadian communities, it's the social hub.

The pub. The wedding hall. The watering hole.

Cruise many a Canadian community and the Royal Canadian Legion branch sign is as identifiable as Tim Hortons.

Legions get a bad rap as a home of cheap draft, pickled eggs and smoky games of pool and darts.

But how many of us really know what goes on behind those walls?

Last Sunday, Harry Bowes worked the empty upstairs banquet hall at Legion Branch 459 on the Ninth Line in Stouffville.

The Second World War veteran and town councillor was arranging pieces of art and literature on the long tables. He could have been at home watching the NFL games or dealing with his town council duties. He could have been in Florida.

But the former Main Street pharmacist was co-ordinating entries in the legion's annual art, poetry and essay contests. Judges would arrive soon to pore over the prose and dissect the posters, all on the subject of remembrance.

BRANCH ALSO SERVES MARKHAM

Months ago, Mr. Bowes went from school to school in Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham, which doesn't have a legion branch of its own, promoting participation.

It's easy to fall in love with the legion in November, with its classy Remembrance Day services and poignant poppies. But the work is year-round.

On the south wall of the hall, the legion sign hangs proudly with a recent addendum. A new sign lists the work the legion does in the community: assisting veterans and their families; sponsorship of youth sports teams; youth education programs; sponsorship of air cadets and support of Markham Stouffville Hospital.

This Sunday, the winners in the literary and art competitions will gather in the banquet hall. Proud parents will take photos of their talented kids. The legion members, in their blue berets and sports jackets, will preside over the ceremonies.

More than a beer hall. Much more.

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Entrance to construction site makes mess at library

I have lived in Whitchurch-Stouffville since 1957 and have seen a great deal of change in this area.

The latest is the new subdivision south of the new library just south of downtown Stouffville.

On Nov. 4, I was waiting in the library parking lot. There was a lot of activity at the new subdivision, so I decided to see what was going on.

The builders had cut the curb about 30 feet wide, level with the parking lot and were using the roadway to let cars and trucks in. They left mud and stones spread about the south side of the parking lot.

In this area, you have disabled parking spots and children running back and forth between the library and pool. There are no signs or barriers indicating children are running about.

At the other end, you have O'Brien Avenue which is being used for trucks and cars making deliveries to this subdivision. On this day, O'Brien was closed.

I would like to know if this town is run by the developers or if they had any say in this matter at all.

PATRICK CASHMAN
WHITCHURCH-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

Residents don't have to pay for development in town

People of Whitchurch-Stouffville, you voted for development and now you have to pay the price.

Just to make sure you understand something here, you are funding this development.

We have a five-year capital budget of \$27 million; \$19 million for roads and public work facilities and equipment funded through developmental charges and \$10 million from our reserve (of \$12 million), a debenture of \$2 million (of the \$3-million cost) for a new fire hall.

Your money is funding this development. You have every right in the world to have a say and ask questions every step of the way.

You can even stop funding something that is harmful to the town.

In fact, it is your duty.

RANDY MOLE
STOUFFVILLE

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune
A Metroland Community Newspaper

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

Phone: 905-640-2512 • Fax: 905-640-8778
 Classified: 1-800-743-3353 • Distribution: 905-294-8244
 Website: www.yorkregion.com • Email: jmason@ymg.com

Member: Ontario Community Newspapers Association
 Canadian Community Newspapers Association
 Ontario Press Council

Editor in Chief
Debra Kelly

Editor
Jim Mason

Reporters
Joan Ransberry, Hannelore Volpe

Retail Sales Manager
Steve Kane

Sales Representative
Susan Berry

Production Manager
Pam Nichols

Office Manager
Vivian O'Neil

Business Manager
Robert Lazurko

Advertising Director, Retail Sales & Flyers
Nicole Fletcher

Advertising Director, Classified, Real Estate & Events Management
Gord Paolucci

Managing Director, Real Estate
Mike Rogerson

Director of Production
John Futey

Distribution Manager
Barry Black

Sales Manager, New Business Development & Distribution
Dawna Andrews

General Manager, York Region Printing
Bob Dean

Marketing & Promotions
Debra Weller

Shows Manager
Stacey Allen

Classified Manager
Ann Campbell