

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Violence in youth sport part of problem

Re: *Athletic youth at risk from heart injury, Sept. 30.*

Chris Traber's article is very timely and should merit more acknowledgements in our community.

Although it was not explicitly stated, violence in youth sport has become a related issue of great importance.

The article talked about the heart condition known as commotio cordis, which is caused by a blow to the chest. Dr. Zaev Wulffhart described the condition and said the target group is male athletes around 14 years of age playing sports including soccer, hockey and basketball.

This is a serious issue. Most coaches, parents and athletes are becoming all too normalized to violence in sport. Violence is so entrenched in modern sport that it is seen as normal.

Dr. Wulffhart calls prevention of such violence "a thorny proposition" since a blow to the chest can come at any time and anywhere.

I think the seriousness of this condition in sport should be dealt with. Although a rare occurrence, a young athlete in Ajax died from it.

There is no reason to scare children away from playing sports, but less violent strategies and safer conditions are required.

The article should serve as an eye opener for athletes and coaches. They

should take care when playing recreational and organized sport.

ASHVINI NIMKAR
MARKHAM

Gun control money could have hired officers

Re: *Media doesn't make crimes up, editorial, Sept. 30.*

Your editorial begs to have the question answered: what has Bill C-68, the gun control legislation, achieved with nearly \$1 billion worth of taxpayer money boondoggled away?

The editorial clearly states that front-line officers feel there are much more guns on the street now than in years past. So much for gun registration.

How many police officers might have been hired with just a fraction of this cost?

MARK STRAIT
STOUFFVILLE

Markham Fair volunteers keep tradition alive

Congratulations to president Paul Reesor and all the other volunteers who helped to make the 160th Markham Fair such a huge success.

They all deserve the people's thanks, as their work and dedication keeps the fair tradition alive every year.

K. BUSHELL
MARKHAM



Biotech advancements can pose problem for organic farmers

Recently, I met with a group of organic farmers in Saskatchewan who are at the frontlines in the battle that will determine the future of farming.

The farmers to whom I talked were spooked by the infamous Supreme Court ruling on canola plants growing in the fields of Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser actually belonged to biotechnology giant Monsanto. This was because some of the plants were carrying genes resistant to Monsanto's pesticide, Roundup, even though Mr. Schmeiser had not purchased "Roundup-ready" canola seed from the company.

Despite Mr. Schmeiser's claim he had not deliberately planted the seeds and that they were somehow contaminating his fields, the court ruled he had to pay the corporate giant for having them on his property.

It has been learned through the widespread planting of transgenic plants (commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms or GMOs), that despite buffer zones between them and conventional plants, transgenes



David Suzuki

readily move over considerable distances.

Pollen is light and can be blown away or carried by unwitting agents such as mammals, birds or insects. Organic farmers are now vulnerable to contamination of their crops.

The problem for such farmers and opponents of biotechnology is that our federal and provincial governments seem unconcerned about the potential risks of transgenic crops and focus entirely on exploiting the benefits.

For the average person, claims and counterclaims over transgenic crops seem arcane

and jargon-laden, difficult to assess.

As a scientist, I am shocked at the ease with which past history and experience are forgotten when there seems to be an economic opportunity. As a geneticist, I am surprised my peer group seems so reluctant to engage in genuine discussion about the claims being made for and against transgenic organisms.

Let me make my position clear.

I once had the largest genetics lab in basic research in Canada. I was obsessed with research and genetics consumed most of my waking hours, seven days a week. It was my passion and I was good at it.

By the 1970s, I had also embarked on a second career popularizing science and examining its implications. Genetics was growing explosively as new insights and technical manipulations enabled us to seek answers to questions once felt impossible to test.

In my own lab, there was growing excitement and pressure to exploit the powerful analytic tools of genetic engineering.

But I was also acutely aware that this was a

scientific revolution with enormous social, economic and ethical questions that had to be addressed and if I and my lab were actively engaged in using the new technology, how could I escape the very real or perceived bias of vested interest?

To be a credible participant in the debate around biotechnology, I deliberately left an active career in research. After all, I had achieved far more recognition for my work than I ever dreamed and continue to derive great delight in the staggering achievements.

But I recognized that to examine the technology critically, I could not be directly immersed in it.

When the federal government is charged with both promoting biotechnology and regulating it, you know there will be a conflict of interest. And I fear that farmers and consumers will be the ultimate losers.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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