

OPINION

Editorial

Pickering Airport site makes sense; earmarked since 1972

The time for the Pickering Airport hasn't arrived yet, but it's on schedule. Blame the need on growth: the population of the GTA will grow by 50 per cent over the next 27 years. Pearson International Airport in Mississauga will reach capacity in 15 years. Planes will have to land and take off elsewhere.

The Greater Toronto Airport Authority, which was asked by the federal government to study Pickering, thinks the site in western Durham Region is right for an airport.

For York Region residents, the location at Hwy. 7 and Brock Road is five minutes from the Markham border.

With half the growth in the GTA expected to take place in York and Durham, the site makes sense. It also evens the playing field of airports across southern Ontario, given the western locations of Pearson and Hamilton Airport.

Pickering is not as central as Buttonville Airport, which will be closed with Markham and Oshawa airports when Pickering opens. But Pickering has room for expansion, something Buttonville hasn't had in years.

The Pickering site is the envy of airport authorities across North America because the land is owned by the government. The property has been held for a proposed airport since 1972.

The Buttonville site can readily be transformed into a business park. Its residential neighbours won't miss the planes.

Still, Pickering is not a slam dunk. There are questions, specifically concerning the environment. There is a call to protect the quiet rural communities that now occupy the property.

However, the main reason those communities still exist is the airport designation. Without it, they would be awash in suburbia such as the southern part of Durham Region.

Noise and traffic are major concerns. The plan calls on York Region to preserve a corridor for an arterial road connecting Hwy. 404 to Hwy. 48.

Pickering won't happen overnight and the GTAA is giving residents an opportunity to speak out at a series of open houses. The series comes to Stouffville's Latham Hall Tuesday night.



Letters to the Editor

Bat boxes dividing Ballantrae

Re: Disease fear shelves Ballantrae bat boxes Oct. 28.

We can't believe what is happening in Ballantrae. We moved here for the same reasons many others did.

We could see forests and wildlife up close and buy our food direct from the farms. Kids play outside without having to be guarded. Living here, my children appreciate nature and the importance of farming. They are active supporters of the environment.

We picked Whitchurch-Stouffville as our home because these were things we valued and we heard the residents and local council felt the same way, unlike many towns around us.

That's all slipping away. What should have been a simple environmental project has become a rift dividing our community into us and them. Anyone who attended the public meeting in the spring and follow-up council meeting can attest to that.

Councillor Phil Bannon, regardless of how you were elected and who supported you, you must represent all of Ballantrae.

To those neighbours new to our community, there are snakes, bats, birds, deer and even coyotes living in our back yards. They have no intention of leaving. In building over their home you are inviting them to move in with you. Why not give them an alternative?

I understand people are naturally afraid of these creatures. But a reasonable person (and I saw many on council) would listen to the available

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information, ask questions and make a rational decision.

In the spring, I brought to a council meeting a group of girl guides and brownies, all of whom feel very strongly about their school, park and community centre and wanted to make their voices heard. The children use these facilities 10 months of the year, five days a week.

They spoke to council and were there for the ruling. The girls learned how the democratic process works, that you may not get everything, but a fair compromise.

This month I had to explain to them life's not so fair and democratic, that people will agree to one thing and then silently find ways to get what they want in the end.

Mayor Sherban and councillors, I implore you to use your elected power to restore reason to this situation and lead this community to an educated decision. Help us live in harmony with our natural environment, rather than handing an eviction notice to the species in danger in this community.

ANDREW & SHARON BURDETTE
 BALLANTRAE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

The deejay who loved to pick on us

Stouffville lost a good friend and its worst enemy Saturday.

Legendary Toronto deejay Tom Rivers fit both bills. He died at 57 after battling cancer.

Mr. Rivers was the king of Toronto, AM rock 'n' roll radio in the 1980s, first at CHUM and later CFTR.

He was big (six feet, eight inches), loud and quick on his feet.

And he loved to pick on Stouffville for some reason.

After GHUM fired him, unjustly as he would prove in court, Mr. Rivers took the weekend afternoon shift on CFTR, hardly prime time in radioland.

"A big spill at the Stouffville sewage plant, details in the news at the top of the hour," he said one day before playing another Huey Lewis and the News tune.

But there was no update, because there was no spill. The joke was on Stouffville, as it was so many times with Tom. There was his ode to the Stouffville hockey jacket and a line about snow-knitting being an Olympic sport here.

When a team from CFTR was announced for a charity sno-pitch game in 1986 in Stouffville Memorial Park, it did not include Mr. Rivers' name. I took him to task in this column for not having enough guts to show his face in the small town he loved to belittle.

He showed up and played.

The next year we upped the ante with a wager, recorded on air and in print. And Team Stouffville won, giving me Tom's job, nervously announcing on the Rivers Air Force show one morning.

If CFTR had won, Mr. Rivers would have been Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor for a day. Perish the thought.

The Stouffville-Rivers war died like all radio promotions.

CFTR went all news. Tom Rivers bounced around the Toronto dial, including stints at Talk 640 and, most recently, Jackfm.

We met years later at the Markham Fair and I asked him the question he'd never really answered before: Why Stouffville?

"It just sounded right to rag on," he said. "Like when you're driving up the 400 and you see the sign for Bond Head. They're perfect, small towns that are close enough to the city that listeners know them. Stouffville worked."

Rest in peace, big guy.
Jim Mason is editor of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

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