

# OPINION

Stouffville  
**Sun-Tribune**  
A Metroland community newspaper  
34 Civic Ave, 3rd floor, Stouffville, ON. L4A 7Z5  
PUBLISHER **Ian Proudfoot**

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
**Debora Kelly**  
BUSINESS MANAGER  
**Robert Lazaruko**  
DIRECTOR PRODUCTION,  
INTERACTIVE MEDIA  
**John Futhey**

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR,  
RETAIL & FLYER SALES  
**Nicole Fletcher**  
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR,  
CLASSIFIED, REAL ESTATE  
& EVENTS MANAGEMENT  
**Gord Paolucci**

DISTRIBUTION DIRECTOR,  
CIRCULATION  
**Barry Black**  
DIRECTOR, CIRCULATION  
SYSTEMS  
**Lynn Pashko**

MARKETING/PARTNERSHIPS  
DIRECTOR  
**Debra Weller**  
YORK REGION PRINTING  
GENERAL MANAGER  
**Bob Dean**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Region not after headlines

Re: Region's \$500,000 tsunami donation simply wrong, guest column by Bruce Annan, Jan. 13.

While I appreciate an individual's right to an opinion, I would like to correct several inaccurate points regarding the region's decision to donate \$500,000 to aid tsunami relief efforts; a donation on behalf of all York Region residents in our nine area municipalities.

Contrary to Mr. Annan's opinion, the donation was not done merely through an "informal telephone poll" of regional councillors. The matter was discussed in an e-mail to all members of regional council and then raised at the region's regularly scheduled finance and administration committee meeting Jan. 6.

With 12 members of regional council in attendance, the committee enjoyed a fulsome debate on this important issue.

In the end, the committee voted unanimously on the donation, requesting the money be issued immediately.

Regional council will ratify this decision at its Jan. 20 council meeting.

This was not a political decision to garner headlines. Members of regional council recognized the seriousness of the disaster, especially in relationship to the residents of our region who continue to be affected by this tragedy.

To suggest an underlying current is at play through this donation or the two agencies where the funds have been directed is offensive.

Regional council has worked hard to build healthy reserve funds to assist with

our organization's future. The term "political slush fund" merely demonstrates a lack of business acumen.

Our council continues to provide appropriate funds for York Regional Police services, public and rapid transit, social services and affordable housing, public health and emergency medical services.

In addition, regional council continues its \$63-million commitment to York Region's three hospitals toward their capital expansion plans.

We continue our work to create a safe, healthy and caring community for residents and businesses. York Region is a character community and I am proud our residents have been able to assist in a time of need.

**BILL FISCH**  
REGIONAL CHAIRPERSON, CEO  
THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

### Seniors appreciate lights tour

A big thank you to Markham council and York Region Transit for providing seniors with their annual tour of Christmas lights in Markham. Our residents did their best to celebrate.

A big surprise came on Daniel Court, where several children and their mothers boarded the bus and served home-made cookies and hot cider. It was then on to the adults centre for hot chocolate, doughnuts and entertainment. A lovely way to end an enjoyable evening.

**MARGARET CAMPBELL**  
MARKHAM



## Tsunami relief demonstrates humanity's ability to give

When a wall of water crashed across the shorelines of several Asian countries on Dec. 26, it was a powerful reminder of just how vulnerable humanity can be to the forces of nature — especially people living in developing countries.

Dramatic and devastating, the tsunami left at least 150,000 dead, millions homeless and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Fortunately, the world has responded with an enormous outpouring of support.

Within days of the disaster, politicians in developed countries began to announce aid packages. Donations from the public have been even more remarkable.

In fact, some aid agencies have even stopped accepting relief money specifically for the tsunami disaster because they simply don't have the capacity to spend it on the ground in the afflicted countries.

But in all our efforts to bring some hope to those suffering, we must not forget the developing world needs our help every day.

Those living in poorer countries do not often have access to the services and infra-



David Suzuki

structure we take for granted.

At the best of times, they may not have healthy food, medical services, clean water or sanitation. In times of crisis, what little these countries have to protect their citizens can easily be overwhelmed.

We also must not forget the tsunami isn't the only humanitarian crisis facing the developing world today. Last year, more than 1.5 million Africans died from AIDS.

Every year, more than two million people die from tuberculosis and one million people die from malaria, most of them in developing countries. These diseases are part of the rea-

son nearly one-fifth of children born in sub-Saharan Africa will not live past the age of five.

The tsunami has also taken the spotlight off other long-suffering regions, such as Sudan and Uganda. Millions of refugees in these areas are still living in squalid camps. Such camps are breeding grounds for the same diseases experts are concerned could become rampant in areas affected by the tsunami because of a lack of sanitation.

None of this is to say that countries suffering in the wake of the tsunami don't need our help — they do. But the tsunami was really a sobering reality check.

Our world is unpredictable and disaster could strike any time, often hurting poorer regions the most. Yet, one glance at the list of casualties from the tsunami and it becomes clear the disaster's reach goes far beyond Asia. Canadians, Swedes, Americans and those of many other nationalities also died.

Since the disaster, there have been calls for a better tsunami early warning system. That seems obvious.

But warnings are only useful if they are heeded. And we are getting all sorts of warn-

ings about the future we continue to ignore.

We were told, for example, coral reefs and mangrove forests helped buffer coastlines from damaging waves.

Yet many such ecosystems in the Indian Ocean were lost to development in recent years — ecosystems that may have offered protection to some areas from the tsunami.

Scientists are also continuing to warn us about the effects of climate change, especially on developing nations that lack the infrastructure to respond to more frequent severe weather events, rising sea levels and changing precipitation patterns.

Unfortunately, while the developed world's response to the tsunami disaster has been heartening, our response to climate change has been tepid at best.

It's not that humanity lacks the capacity to respond.

Obviously, judging from recent events, humanity's capacity for compassion can be profound. It's just unfortunate that it takes a tsunami to trigger it.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at [www.david-suzuki.org](http://www.david-suzuki.org)

### LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. Submissions must be less than 400 words and include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and edit for clarity and space.

Letters to the Editor,  
The Sun-Tribune  
34 Civic Ave.  
Box 154  
Stouffville, ON  
L4A 7Z5  
jmason@yrmg.com

### EDITORIAL

Editor  
**Jim Mason**  
jmason@yrmg.com  
Assistant Editor, News  
**Frank King**  
fking@yrmg.com

### ADMINISTRATION

Office Manager  
**Vivian O'Neill**  
vonell@yrmg.com

### PRODUCTION

Manager  
**Pam Nichols**  
pnichols@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING  
Classified Manager  
**Ann Campbell**  
acampbell@yrmg.com

Managing Director, New  
Business & Flyer Sales  
**Dauna Andrews**  
dandrews@yrmg.com

### New Business Manager

**Steve Kane**  
skane@yrmg.com

Managing Director,  
Real Estate  
**Mike Rogerson**  
mrogerson@yrmg.com

### EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Shows Manager  
**Stacey Allen**  
sallen@yrmg.com

### EDITORIAL

905-640-2612  
Fax: 905-640-8778

### ADVERTISING

905-640-2612/Classified:  
1-800-743-3353/Fax: 905-853-1765

### DISTRIBUTION

905-294-8244

Canadian  
Circulations  
Audit Board Member

Ontario  
Press  
Council

### Sun-Tribune

A York Region Newspaper Group community newspaper. The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a member of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 70 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Economist & Sun (Markham), The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com) and York Region Printing.