

# OPINION

Stouffville  
**Sun-Tribune**

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Easy to donate other's money

Re: Region not after headlines, Jan. 15.  
York Regional Chairperson Bill Fisch missed guest columnist Bruce Annan's point completely on the region's donation to tsunami relief.

Mr. Annan (nor, I'm sure anyone in York Region) does not dispute the need for assistance to the victims of this tragedy. The point is this donation was validated by the 12 members of regional council with money that was not theirs.

Perhaps Mr. Annan's "suggestion of underlying currents" behind York's donation was offensive but, sir, so was the region's assumption it could take taxpayers' money and donate it to any charity of its choice.

Call it a slush fund, healthy reserve fund or any other name but it is still not council's private fund.

We could all look wonderfully generous if we could throw someone else's money into the pot and claim the donation as our own.

L. CHESNEY  
MARKHAM

### Tsunami donation about votes

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

I agree with the writer. York Region should not have contributed to the tsunami relief efforts.

I fail to understand why the municipality or even the province have to contribute to these efforts. This should be up

to the federal government.

Besides, it's our money. At the municipal, provincial or federal level, the money is picked from the pockets of taxpayers.

Various levels of government are bending over backwards to contribute mainly because their constituents come from the affected areas. It's all about the vote.

As we know, the Liberal government was voted into power because of the constituencies in the GTA — and it is protecting and enhancing that vote.

Canada is a generous country and the contributions made by the people toward tsunami relief is proof of that fact. But the motives of various levels of government and their contribution to tsunami relief is suspect.

GOWRI RAJAN  
MARKHAM

### Marriage between man, woman

The question of what is a traditional marriage has returned. In my opinion, traditional means without change. Many people have family traditions that are kept and honoured without change.

Therefore, I believe in keeping tradition as far as marriage is concerned. The definition should stand as is, between a man and a woman.

The dictionary is quite clear in its definition of tradition. It means the passing on of customs or beliefs from generation to generation.

D. ROBERTSON  
STOUFFVILLE



## Groundwork for Grit health care cuts laid by NDP, Tories

Now you know where your \$900 a year in new health premiums is going — into severance payments for nurses.

The Ontario government has announced an additional \$200 million for hospitals, nearly half of which will be spent getting rid of nurses.

So THAT's why you have to wait 18 months for surgery — too many darned nurses.

Certainly sounds like we're making progress, after spending a few hundred million last year to rid the system of privately operated MRI machines. And repulsing mobile diagnostic clinics at the border.

But the provincial Liberals are just continuing the job started by Bob Rae's NDP, which looked at spiralling health care costs and decided an excess of doctors was the problem. So they slashed the number of university positions available for training them. Now two million Ontarians can't find a family doctor.

Once we're finished getting rid of doctors and nurses, the health care system will be fine. And with one-third of our nurses and



Bruce Annan

half our GPs over age 50, we're getting close.

Southlake Regional Health Centre and Markham Stouffville Hospital are among the one-half of Ontario's 154 hospitals getting a cut of the \$200 million because they'll have balanced budgets by 2006. No doubt York Central will get inside with this strategy of becoming nurse-free as well.

Not to pick on the Liberals and NDP, as much fun as it is. The Conservatives had nearly a decade in power and failed to confront the demographic inevitability: health care spending is increasing at triple the rate of inflation, thanks to aging baby boomers.

At the current pace, health will consume 100 per cent of government spending in less than 20 years.

When your focus is getting re-elected in four years, you don't make difficult decisions that will pay off in two decades. And, of course, the health care crisis is still abstract for politicians and other VIPs who enjoy our present two-tier system.

You know, our existing two-tier system, where you can get surgery quickly if you travel in the right circles. Just call an influential friend, who'll talk to someone who can bump you up to the front of the line. If you didn't know this, you don't travel in the right circles — just like the peasants in the Soviet Union, that "universal health care" paradigm.

Ralph Klein is retiring soon as Alberta premier, which gives him the freedom to say his province will consider models of mixed public/private health care. Like they have in France or Sweden or every other modern democracy in the world.

To which the usual vested interests will scream, "American-style two-tier!", fighting

to protect their monopoly. Because unions, bureaucrats and academics know that giving patients a choice will threaten their power base.

And count on opposition from Ottawa, where 10,000 civil servants "work" for the Ministry of Health without actually providing any medical care. Where the federal government increased its staff count by 24 per cent from 1998 to 2003.

Human nature dictates if a product is "free", people consume more of it. And if providers of said product are penalized (with funding cutbacks) rather than rewarded (with increased payments) for supplying more product, they'll provide less. Which is why our system is unsustainable, as was perfectly obvious 20 years ago.

But, we'll thrash about for another decade before facing reality and adopting a user-pay health care model that works. Such as, for instance, dentistry in Ontario.

Had any trouble finding a dentist lately?

York Region resident Bruce Annan, former York Region Newspaper Group publisher, is a writer and consultant.

### LETTERS POLICY

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

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