

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Regional effort could draw investment

York Region is a vibrant, thriving community that must work to sustain economic growth.

The region's own survey last year indicated a better strategy is desired to achieve this and, as it works on a 2005 economic plan over the next few months, it should initiate a strategy to aggressively promote each of its nine municipalities and what they have to offer.

In the region's survey, community leaders and business owners offered suggestions on what it needs to do to sustain prosperity, attract new business and increase the number of work opportunities within its burgeoning borders.

Regional leaders are well aware of the challenges York faces.

Community leaders offered a solid suggestion that, above all, the region needs better co-ordination between local, regional and senior levels of government to enhance economic vibrancy.

A prime example is a strategy for attracting new business.

As one of Canada's largest and most prosperous communities, the region should have a concise and co-ordinated advertising campaign to sell itself as a whole, rather than each municipality flogging its merits separately in patchwork TV, radio and overseas ads.

While high-profile campaigns might draw all kinds of businesses, not every business is the right fit for every town.

The creation of "clusters" of appropriately aligned businesses and services would benefit all areas since, ironically, the smaller municipalities that need to attract new business are the ones that can least afford such an undertaking.

A co-ordinated regional marketing strategy would alleviate this problem. It would also cut municipal taxpayer costs and avoid duplication.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Paving paradise to put up parking lots

Drive along wind-swept Hwy. 48 south of Stouffville Road and look to the east, through the snow-clad corn fields.

If you squint strongly enough and imagine a little, like Kevin Costner in *Field of Dreams*, you can see them.

Call them big box stores. Call it a power centre. If the developers have their way with this town, it will be built in this quadrant of Stouffville.

Just make sure you call it ugly.

If indoor shopping malls, such as Markville in Markham and Upper Canada in Newmarket, were the future, they're now the distant past, unfortunately. Vaughan Mills, the mega-mall that opened late last year in southwest York Region, was the first covered mall built in this country in 14 years.

Yet, indoor shopping is exactly what a country with a two-month summer should be prescribed. It's a throwback to the main streets of old. Stores on top of each other providing a multitude of services in a competitive marketplace all under one roof.

It doesn't seem that long ago we were laughing at Scarborough's famed Golden Mile and other strip plazas. They were dinosaurs. Massive, ugly and grey parking lots fronting stores on main drags.

Funny, but that's how every power centre looks.

A group of big box stores is supposed to appeal to the modern shopper, who is willing to drive longer distances and walk miles of store aisles for lower prices.

It sounds so cosy. And good luck getting the same clerk twice in a 100-square-foot craft supplies or building materials store. A boutique this isn't.

Civil libertarians in Hartford, Conn. are concerned residents' access to free speech is being curtailed at privately owned big box developments in a way it never was on main street.

Forget the ability to protest, it's our lost sense of community and steam-rolled countryside we should be worrying about.

More shopping opportunities and new residents are welcome.

Making this town look like every other community on the continent isn't.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

Letters to the Editor

Police can't determine marijuana impairment

Re: Family wants name cleared, Jan. 13.

It is ridiculous to think police officers who have far less medical training than doctors can determine by use of some roadside tests if someone is "impaired" by drugs.

It must be obvious to everyone by now police are just trying to hold on to their huge budgets. This "drugged driving" legislation currently sneaking through Parliament will give police the opportunity to profile young drivers and people with brown skin or long hair.

We have all seen people's ability to drive "impaired" by alcohol, prescription drugs, loud stereos, rowdy kids, passengers or pets in the car, CD players, cigarettes, huge coffee cups, cell phones, inexperience, blood-sugar imbalances, old-age, fatigue and just plain old stupidity.

To choose one drug as an "impairment factor" is arbitrary and discriminatory.

Cannabis affects every user differently. If any impairment occurs at all, it is usually gone in 20 to 60 minutes. But THC can be detected in urine and blood for weeks after the last puff.

To be booked for impaired driving simply because there is a trace of THC in your system is much like having one beer tonight and getting nailed for impaired driving five days from now.

Add the fact that study after study from Europe has shown cannabis users drive slower and more cautiously than non-users, and the notion of cannabis as a "major contributor" to traffic accidents seems ridiculous.

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@yrng.com

Where are the official numbers? What official study was ever done in Canada? Just where do police get these statistics?

RUSSELL BARTH
 EDUCATORS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY
 OTTAWA

Councillor paid for shovels

I am writing this letter as an appreciative parent and a member of school council at my daughter's school.

A short time ago we had shovels stolen from our kindergarten area so I decided to bring this up at our meeting.

Well, the discussion did not have to go very far because a gentleman attending our meeting, as he always does, spoke right up. He graciously provided Canadian Tire money from his own pocket to replace the shovels.

I would like to applaud this man, Councillor Harry Bowes.

Thank you, sir, and might I add the children are smiling again.

CHRISTINE FERGUSON
 STOUFFVILLE

CORRECTION

Page reprinted

Page 6 in the Jan. 20 issue was inadvertently reprinted from the Jan. 13 edition. The Sun-Tribune regrets the error.

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