

# OPINION

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**Sun-Tribune**  
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## Editorial

### SUV 'freebates' from government hurt families

It's always a good thing when governments recognize and reward conscientious consumers.

Especially when it comes to the environment, an issue once again taking centre stage on the national agenda.

Having said that, it's a copout when added taxes (read "fees") are slapped on consumers because governments fail to take an innovative leadership role.

Last week, Ottawa snuck one such "fee", dubbed a feebate, into its budget as a proposal that would see added costs placed on new SUVs and other large vehicles.

The idea is to steer consumers away from inefficient car purchases and lead them, wallet in hand, to smaller, more efficient models.

The feds have chosen a proposal that would punish one segment of society — the family — to cover its own failure to make any real commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Prime Minister Paul Martin has chosen a plan to nickel and dime cash-strapped taxpayers, rather than force big pollution-causing industries to invest in environment-friendly technology.

What makes this feebate proposal more maddening is Environment Minister Stephane Dion hinting at more emission reduction breaks for industries responsible for most of the country's air pollution.

Mr. Dion is sympathetic to industrial pollution emitters, stating, "It's certain that we mustn't penalize a sector that today finds itself in a situation where the technology does not yet exist to do much more."

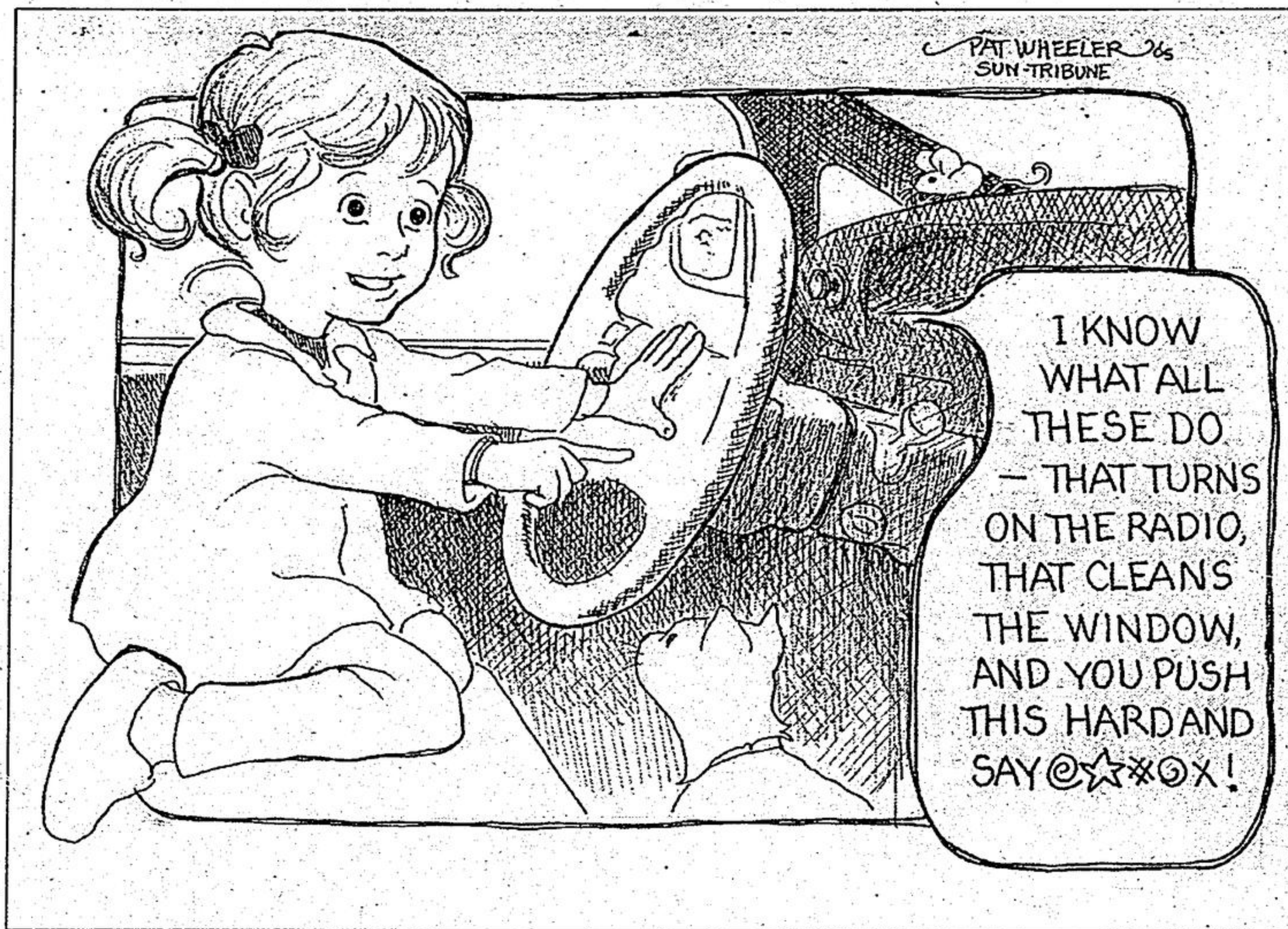
Is that right?

Industries that pump half of the greenhouse gas emissions into our air can't do much more, but cash-strapped families can?

While large vehicles may have a reputation as being inefficient, many York Region families need vans and SUVs to drive their children to events because education boards can't afford busing.

More than 80 per cent of York Region's businesses are small, with fewer than 10 employees. These hard-working entrepreneurs often use vans to transport goods and services across the Greater Toronto Area.

While inefficient vehicles — about 20 per cent of the 2.6 million cars produced each year in Canada — are big contributors to the country's greenhouse gas emissions, it's not right to put the onus directly on the backs of Canadian families and small business.



## Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

### Still in love with this place, warts and all

A new family moved in around the corner. That's not really news.

The for sale sign disappeared the same day the moving trucks arrived. Boxes decorated the driveway, waiting for large lads to cart them to their appointed room indoors.

The owners stood proudly on the front stoop, surveying their new home town.

I wanted to stop and talk to them, as an unofficial agent of some quasi Welcome Wagon.

I wanted to tell them about the community they now call home.

I wanted to tell them about the local flavour. About the Stouffville Country Market down the street, about the fruit and vegetable vendors and the other folks selling discount CDs and movies.

I wanted to tell them about the Strawberry Festival and the crowds that will pack the downtown core of their town for fireworks, food and festivities.

I wanted to tell them about local history. About Abraham Stouffer and Elizabeth Reesor Stouffer who moved here from Pennsylvania in 1804 to pioneer in what is now Stouffville.

There's more recent and funky history of note, like the Stouffville Vinegar Works and Stouffville goldfish supply company.

I wanted to tell them about the great kids in this town, excelling in the arts, sports and the classroom at area schools; the unsung heroes who quietly do their thing so well.

Same for our service clubs, who work so hard to build community spirit and help the less fortunate.

Ditto for our numerous churches, who care for their own but also for our local community and the world.

I wanted to talk about our warts, too.

About the two marijuana grow houses busted in the neighbourhood this century.

About the construction of two arenas and a pool-library complex that split factions of the community three times during the last 20 years.

And about the other newcomers to Stouffville, who will arrive in droves over the next two decades; the new pioneers, if you will, discovering a place we have come to mostly love.

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

## Letters to the Editor

### Gallery has confusing past

*Re: Gallery wants more money from town, Feb. 10.*

Is the Latcham Gallery really 25 years old?

The Latcham Gallery Association is clinging to the alleged 25-year-old art gallery. Does this mean it is accepting responsibility, financial and otherwise, for what was done while the so-called gallery held exhibitions in the library's multi-purpose room, requested and received funds from the Ontario Arts Council and lived off the budget of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library board?

The Latcham Gallery Association was incorporated on June 1, 1998 and reportedly had no previous existence under any other name. Why was the name Latcham Gallery chosen?

There was only one Latcham Gallery. It was the name given, for some obscure reason, to the multi-purpose room, built in 1977. Should it have been the Latcham Room? There was another Latcham gallery, but it was unofficial. It was the name used by the art committee of the library board.

There is also the question of the ownership of the sculptures in the sculpture walk in downtown Stouffville. Where are the supporting documents?

It's a confusing story: a room in 1977; an art committee in 1979 along with an art gallery with no founding documents and public funding from the OAC and Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville through the library board.

The publicly funded gallery dwindled into a program of the library by 1996 again without supporting documentation. In 1998, it ceased to be even a program. The art committee was not appointed in 1998. The room was renamed. Why?

What is it to be, Latcham Gallery Association? Responsibility for the past or your own independent path as of June 1, 1998?

MARGARET L. MAY  
STOUFFVILLE

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@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

### Parade wear optional for council

*Re: Build new Stouffville theatre, letter, Feb. 24.*

Just when I thought no one cared any longer for the community, given the lack of letters from regular submitters of old (David Probert, Fred Robbins etc.), Bob Lewis comes down from the mountain.

Any thinking person must agree with his observations on constructing a new building for the theatre over the inherent and hidden problems and costs involved with refurbishing the old.

Parking will be the least of the problems. The whole exercise harkens back to the story of the emperor who, wanting to look good, hired a band of brigands to weave a new suit of clothes from gold supplied by the taxpayers, suggesting those citizens lacked culture and would not be able to see the beauty right before their eyes.

The gullible emperor, not seeing anything on the hanger, went through the whole exercise of dressing prior to the parade.

I apologize in advance for the visual about to be presented, one only the uncultured will get.

The mayor and most of council are not wearing any clothes. The parade is about to begin and most folks to whom I've spoken think February is a good time for this to take place.

TOM WINTERS  
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