

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Religion too sensitive for newspaper cartoons

Re: cartoon, April 23.

This very unkind caricature was insulting to our late pontiff, John Paul II, (the cobwebs on the wheels of the "popemobile") to our newly elected Pope Benedict XVI and to all who cherish their Catholic faith.

Your papers have been a great source of local news and information to us since we moved to Stouffville 35 years ago. Through the years you've always been very respectful toward the religious beliefs of those living in the area and we ask that you do the same for us now.

The Roman Catholic church is not a political organization that can change according to the popular beliefs of the secular world or the times.

While some of the more superficial customs and traditions can and have evolved through the years, we believe there are certain intrinsic truths and values that can't be changed — even by a new Pope.

Perhaps some subjects are just too sensitive to be trivialized by a cartoon in a newspaper.

SIG & TERESA KUSATZ
STOUFFVILLE

Dead dog in no man's land

Re: Dog left to die with slashed throat,
April 28.

I am the person who found the dog

and had him die in my arms just as I got him to the vet.

Someone had slit the poor animal's throat, as you reported. My first thought on finding the dog was to call animal control, as my thoughts were that these people helped animals. My mistake.

This incident took place literally one block east of the Whitchurch-Stouffville animal control border in Durham Region.

I tried to get the dog help through these channels, as well as police and was turned down and given the runaround. Several of these animal control people admitted to me they were only a few minutes away, but were unable to cross the border.

All these people were told the dog was bleeding out and that we didn't have much time.

I got everything from "I am sorry, but I can't go one block past my border", "if this is an emergency, call the police" to not getting any answers on the phone.

I believe this is a disgusting way for the system that cares for animals to operate.

I tried to re-call these agencies to find out why we were unable to get help and again got the royal runaround.

They did nothing whatsoever, probably costing the life of this helpless animal.

MIKE HALL
CLAREMONT



Sharing gas tax will help cities, environment

Official or not, it seems our federal politicians are in full-on electioneering mode.

Right now, whatever they say and do is being watched very carefully by their opponents and the media. Everything is put through an election filter to see how what is being said has been designed to win more votes.

Unfortunately, that also means even announcements or decisions long in the making are being treated as election fodder.

So when Prime Minister Paul Martin was in Vancouver recently to announce a joint agreement on the transfer of a percentage of gas taxes back to cities, it was reported as simply a case of the federal government shovelling money off the back of a truck to distract voters from the Gomery inquiry.

And that's neither accurate nor fair.

Agreements between levels of government in this country are not exactly easy to come by. Federal, provincial and municipal governments often jealously guard their jurisdictions from any perceived encroachment. And since jurisdictions often overlap, it can create real



David Suzuki

problems when priorities differ.

That's why the announcement in Vancouver was such good news.

Here we had the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, which represents cities and towns, the province of British Columbia and the federal government all agreeing — on a budget item no less.

The item was the promised return of a portion of the federal gas tax back to cities. According to the agreement, the union will receive five cents of the 10-cent per-litre tax.

Last week, the deal got even better when Mr. Martin and NDP leader Jack Layton agreed

to add an extra cent to the agreement.

What does this mean for B.C. municipalities?

It means they will now receive more than \$700 million during the next five years from the federal government.

After five years, the agreement is available to be renewed for another five years, if all parties find it successful.

So far, so good. But here's where it gets really interesting. The money can't be spent on just anything. Instead, it's earmarked to achieve three goals: cleaner air, cleaner water and reduced climate-disrupting emissions. To continue receiving funding, these goals have to be measurable and reported in a transparent fashion.

That's really quite extraordinary.

Municipalities generally do not like to be told how to spend their money. And provinces don't generally like restrictions imposed either.

But in this case, all three levels of government were able to see the clear advantages of putting the money toward sustainability objectives.

Achieving these objectives will have many

benefits, including reduced smog and associated health care costs and reduced infrastructure costs. As a result, the money will now be spent on initiatives such as improving public transit, building bike paths, developing renewable energy projects, retrofitting buildings to be more energy efficient, improving drinking water and sewage system, and more.

These kinds of projects make for a healthier and more liveable city.

It's easy to be cynical about political announcements around election time. But this agreement has set a new precedent in Canada that helps put us on the path toward sustainability.

Hopefully, other provinces and municipal organizations will follow suit with their own agreements. By putting aside jurisdictional squabbles and focusing on the common objectives of a sustainable future, all levels of government can help make Canada a better place in which to live.

Take the Nature Challenge at www.davidsuzuki.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.

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