

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Residents have to be more suspicious

What if it happened here? Terrorists killed 52 people and injured hundreds last week by setting off bombs in London's transit system, a city well conditioned to terrorist attacks due to years of conflict with the Irish Republican Army.

What about Canada — now the only nation on the Al Qaeda hit list that has not been attacked? How safe and prepared is York Region?

"We are vulnerable, there is no doubt about it," Ontario emergency management commissioner Julian Fantino says.

At least 50 terrorist groups are operating in Canada, including Al Qaeda, according to Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

"I do not believe that Canadians are as psychologically prepared for a terrorist attack as I think probably we all should be," federal Public Safety Minister Anne McLellan told an international conference on disaster management in Toronto Monday.

There's no question she is right. And if Canadians in general need to be conscious of threats to our safety, residents of "safe" suburbs such as York Region really need an attitude adjustment. No, this region isn't on the terrorist radar, but it's right next door to the most likely target.

And even if you believe international terrorists know and respect the municipal boundaries of Toronto, the impact of violence there will be felt here as our police, fire and medical resources would undoubtedly be called in to assist.

So what are we doing about it? Well, York Region Transit workers are on heightened alert, looking for abandoned packages when inspecting vehicles. But it would be difficult to take security measures for every passenger getting on a local bus, admitted Don Gordon, general manager of York Region Transit.

The region and most local municipalities have emergency plans designed to deal with a range of catastrophes.

But a big part of the region's emergency preparedness campaign is public awareness and education.

That's because a big part of emergency preparedness is in the hands of citizens. We are told to keep supplies of food, water and medicine on hand in case of emergency.

We are asked to watch for and report suspicious activity, people and parcels.

We must get used to being more vigilant, even a little more suspicious, than we have been. That's why we need to know our government, police and public agencies are prepared to respond should something happen.



Letters to the Editor

Park diamond our own Field of Dreams

Re: Grand old gal takes in another championship, Jim Mason's column, July 7.

I enjoyed Mr. Mason's tribute to the old baseball grandstand in Memorial Park. As he expressed, the ball diamond and grandstand, its pitted old gray boards ever in need of painting, are dear to the hearts of many longtime Stouffville residents.

When my family first moved to Stouffville in the late 1950s, the grandstand and outdoor pool had been newly donated by town benefactor Art Latham.

My dad coached peewee baseball, my brother played shortstop, my mom and I sat in the grandstand and cheered. Now, almost 50 years later, I can sit in the same grandstand and watch the tournament at Strawberry Festival or walk downtown on a summer evening and linger in the park to watch some ball.

It reminds me of the scene in the movie *Field of Dreams* where James Earl Jones' character predicts "people will come" to the magical baseball field in Iowa to sit in the bleachers where "the memories will be so thick they'll have to brush them away from their faces".

I attended the public workshops on the Memorial Park and Bethesda Park master plans last winter. When residents were asked to discuss what they liked about Memorial Park, the ball diamonds and grandstand, as well as outdoor pool and bowling green, were among the favourites for long-time as well as new residents.

In his column, Mr. Mason said the old ball diamond is a town "landmark". As such, it contributes to our sense of place and provides continuity amid the swirling changes in our community.

The ball diamond and grandstand are part of the town's heritage and culture as surely as the clock tower and Main Street and many other familiar and loved places in Stouffville.

As the man said in *Field of Dreams*, "the one constant through all the years, has been baseball" and in

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Stouffville that includes the main diamond and grand old grandstand in Memorial Park.

JILL McWHINNIE
 STOUFFVILLE

Main St., Wal-Mart can't thrive together

Re: Downtown, Main St. need new ideas: Chamber, July 7.

I am pleased thought is being given to the revitalization of Stouffville's downtown area, which has been languishing for the 18 years I have lived here. I certainly hope the meeting of local business owners July 14 generates good ideas.

However, it strikes me as rather ludicrous to have this meeting now, just after a Wal-Mart store south of the corner of Main Street and Hwy. 48 has been approved by council. It is well known Wal-Mart has a long and shameful history of driving local business into bankruptcy once it comes to a town. So, to me it seems pretty simple: if you want a vital downtown, don't have a Wal-Mart.

Then we could start thinking about some of the smart ideas European cities and towns use to be attractive to local inhabitants and tourists, like making the downtown core car-free and creating interesting green spaces that also serve as meeting places; the town square concept.

There is no shortage of options, but it does take political will and a council that is willing to think outside the big box store.

SIBYLLE FOPPA
 STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

When death revisits the small town

It's the absolute downside of life in the small town.

When you wished you lived at Midland and Lawrence, the middle of Mississauga or some other equally obscure address.

You chose to live in a Stouffville, a Ballantrae or a Vandorf because of their community feel, small town values and friendliness. They're attributes new home builders can't upgrade into a two-storey, no matter what the catchy billboards, slick radio spots or glossy brochures say.

Strangers say hello. Neighbours know each other's business, the positive and the seamy. People still care.

When death comes to town, as we witnessed in spades over the last week, a pall is cast over the entire village.

We saw it so dramatically in the 1990s, through popular junior hockey player Dan McNeil, killed in a car accident, and beloved little Courtney Trempe, attacked and killed by a dog. These public deaths shocked and shook the community to its core.

Last week, it was Sandy Madigan and Brad Schell, filling the visitation rooms at the O'Neill Funeral Home and sending people out onto the sidewalks of Church Street asking why.

Sandy was a bubbly, figure skating mom of three beautiful girls and the wife of the always upbeat Patty, Mr. Hockey in Stouffville if there ever was one. Cancer took Sandy, but not before Stouffville rallied behind the Madigans with a sold-out benefit at Rolling Hills golf club this spring.

Brad Schell, from one of Stouffville's most storied families, was a 21-year-old fun-loving contractor who died when he fell from a hydro tower while four-wheeling with friends near Oshawa.

If you didn't know Sandy or Brad, you knew of her children or his parents or grandparents. Your families attended the same schools, played in the same sports clubs and shopped in the same stores.

You were upset by the news of their deaths. That's natural here in the extended family Stouffville remains.

The sign at Bridon Motors carries a message speaking to Brad Schell's legend and his memory.

It's so Stouffville. And it doesn't happen that way at Midland and Lawrence.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

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