

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

More than cops needed to fight crime

It was like a jinx. No sooner had the good news come out — murders were down the first half of 2005 — than the death toll started rising. Within days, murders in York Region went from four to seven, with three homicides since Sunday, two within one hour of each other. Murders, of course, are the headline grabbers and need to be kept in perspective. Most murders are not random acts of violence.

And the good news in the most recent spate of homicides is York Regional Police already have three suspects in custody.

And a closer look at the statistics doesn't help. The newest information here shows robberies jumped to 199 in the first half of 2005 compared to 185 during same period last year.

We shouldn't be surprised about the growing violence. It has been said many times before by many York Region police chiefs: what's happening in Toronto will eventually make its way north.

The question is are our police ready? And probably more importantly, since they hold the purse strings, are our politicians ready?

York Region residents already have the cheapest police force in the GTA. Our per-capita cost for policing is only \$158, compared to \$264 for Toronto. Our police to population ratio is 816 officers for every resident, compared to one cop for every 509 Torontonians.

At this point, York Region is far behind Toronto in the numbers game of policing. If predictions hold true, big city crimes, such as gang-related shootings in the street, are inevitable.

York Region needs to be as pro-active as it can and not just react to the violence when it happens. Hiring more officers with the expertise to handle the extra workload violent crimes bring must be part of the game plan.

New York City's storied former mayor, Rudy Giuliani, told crimefighters in Toronto Monday that large urban areas need to be on the offensive.

Part of that offence, he said, includes the use of sophisticated computer software that can help predict what types of crimes will happen in certain areas by analysing statistical trends.

But there are other ways to get on top of crime before it hits the streets.

York Region needs more cops, but when it comes time to approve a police budget, politicians need to remember it will take more than people power to avoid what plagues Toronto today.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

'A lot' can change after 28 years of evolution

What a difference 28 years makes. "West end subdivision plans rejected by board," reads the headline on the front of the June 23, 1977, Stouffville Tribune. The paper was a gift from my wife, Charlene, and friend Pat Welch, purchased at a weekend auction sale in the Lindsay-area burgh of Little Britain, of all places.

Whatever the cost of the back issue, much of it is priceless and so timely.

The thwarted subdivision would have gone in where homes are now being built, on 100 acres south of Canadian Tire. More than 2,200 people would have been housed in homes, semis, townhouses and apartments.

Trouble was, the land wasn't properly designated for housing in the town's official plan. And Stouffville politicians weren't thrilled with the new-fangled higher density approach to housing.

"We're not going to correct all the problems of humanity by cramming everybody on a 30-foot lot," said planning board chairperson Eldred King, who would become mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville and chairperson of York Region before retiring to Stouffville.

Councillor Bill Kamps told the landowners people were moving to Stouffville for "country atmosphere" and "your plan calls for moving a piece of Toronto to Stouffville".

When the Torontonians, Scarberians and Markhamites invaded Whitchurch-Stouffville in 1977, they could buy a side-split in Ballantrae for \$89,500 or a five-bedroom number with in-ground pool at Musselman's Lake for \$55,900.

That's according to an ad for now-defunct Ballantrae Realty Ltd. Of course, back then the minimum wage was only hovering around \$2 an hour.

A photo of the Stouffville Country Market, then known as Stouffville Stockyards or Stouffville Sales Barns, shows the cars of bargain hunters filling parking lots well up the Tenth Line from the market.

Livestock and household items, likely including 28-year-old newspapers, were auctioned off in weekly sales at the market.

And those 30-foot lots? They're now the minimum in Stouffville.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Don't judge high school students by their dress, haircuts

Re: Smokers' gauntlet degrades school, column by Jim Thomas, Oct. 13.

I'm a little confused as to what exactly is bothering Mr. Thomas.

Is it the fact there is a group of smokers at Stouffville District Secondary School? If so why are you not complaining about the gauntlet that you must run at the Imperial Centre, home of the municipal offices? At least at SDSS, the smokers are not near the entrances.

How many times have you tried to get into the Imperial Centre only to find you must walk around to the front doors because of the haze of smoke caused by the adults at the side door; or walked down Main Street passing workers and owners smoking on the sidewalk? I'm sure this makes a great impression on visitors to our town.

Or is your concern with the non-conformists? What kind of society would we live in if everyone were the same? Just because they dress differently than you does not make them bad. Should we call in the police because they are different?

It was two clean-cut "normal"-looking teens overheard at the leisure centre advocating the abuse of gay students. They didn't look "weird", but I'm glad they are not my children.

As a matter of fact, two of my children were probably part of that group of which Mr. Thomas didn't approve. Although they don't smoke, they are what you would consider non-conformists. Their hair is sometimes green and one sports a Mohawk haircut. However, they are good students. The oldest will be going to university in the fall, the younger will be going in two years.

Are they misfits? Of course not. They are highly

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intelligent, very nice children who express their individuality in their dress.

Maybe you should try to get to know these people. They might actually teach you something, such as tolerance.

Where are the parents? Right here and proud of it.

VALERIE ASHTON
STOUFFVILLE

Town should do what it says

I noticed the unsightly weeds of summer had been cut at some locations in Stouffville, including Blake Street. I wonder if anyone on council ever heard the saying "bolting the door after the horse was stolen" or are they too young?

This is how you look after weeds. After they go to seed, you cut them down, not before.

First thing every spring, an ad is placed on the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville page in The Sun-Tribune telling homeowners to keep their weeds cut down or they could be fined.

As I see it, this is do as I say not as I do.

I did notice the town went one step further and gathered up the weeds and grass. Thank you. It looked so much better, even in the lamplight.

DOROTHY WAGG
STOUFFVILLE

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