

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
 A Metroland community newspaper
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Editorial

Protecting children must be top priority

Robert Levene was awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to 88 counts of making and distributing child porn in Columbus, Ohio back in June 2003, but fled to Thornhill, where his parents live. A warrant was issued for his arrest and remains outstanding, according to Franklin County court officials in Columbus. The charges carry a maximum prison term of more than 300 years, but prosecutors were asking for 40 years. He is a fugitive from justice, living with his parents and many of his neighbours are none the wiser. The Canadian justice system is well aware he has infiltrated a York Region community. He was arrested in November 2003, ordered extradited back to the U.S. to face sentencing. Yet, for two years, he has lived and worked in the community while his case crawls through a lengthy appeal process.

Should the community have been informed of his presence? You bet. Police often wrestle with the idea of telling residents when a convicted sex offender is being released back into the community after serving a sentence.

It happened in York last year when convicted child molester David Dolson, who served six years of an eight-year sentence for sexually assaulting boys, was released to his mother's home in Georgina.

Yet, the Levene case is different. Mr. Dolson did his time and, arguably, could have been rehabilitated. At least the opportunity was there.

As Mr. Levene hasn't yet been sentenced, there has been no chance to cure him, and yet, he has been free to ride through the neighbourhood on his motorcycle and hold down a job.

Police can be hesitant to issue warnings, fearing reprisals in the form of vigilantism. Yet, in Canada, such acts are rare. While police are sworn to protect residents, including convicted child pornographers, the safety of children should always be an overriding factor in decisions about warning residents a sex offender is living and working in their neighbourhood.

Providing the right information is key to this process, not just between parents and children but between parents and the justice system.

If an individual poses a potential threat, parents and schools should be informed.

Someone who has, so far, evaded 40 years in a U.S. jail is a threat.

Police should have let us know.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

See you in 12 months, municipal voters

The front lawns of your subdivision will look different a year from now. The autumn leaves will be joined by signs in a multitude of colours promoting candidates. Whitchurch-Stouffville and all other municipalities across Ontario will elect new councils, mayors and school board trustees on Nov. 13, 2006.

Lucky us, you say. Municipal election voting is up there in the popularity ranks behind getting a flu shot and jury duty. We know somebody has to do it, we just want somebody else to do it on our behalf.

Fewer than half of eligible voters show up at the polls. And don't try and tell me this politically active community we call home is any different.

Even with the tightest of races for mayor — decided on the last poll counted — only 36 per cent of Whitchurch-Stouffville adults bothered to vote in 2003. Even sadder, that number has been decreasing every election for the past four, since 1994.

There is no shortage of potential candidates, at least at the cocktail parties and softball games I've attended in recent years. But it's a different story every third autumn when it's time to sign up as a real candidate.

Those loudmouths, who suggest they could run the town, plow the roads and cut the grass themselves and turn a tidy profit at the same time, can't be found.

Municipal politics just doesn't have enough cache, obviously.

Unless someone proposes a nuclear power plant for a neighbourhood, the same half dozen people will show at council meetings.

Staff and politicians outnumbered taxpayers this week, as councilors decided how to spend the town's money for the next year.

Maybe it will all change. The ripped up roads and oversized homes people are complaining about in this town under transition may spark a new wave of political activism not seen in 25 years, when residents fought to close a landfill site on Hwy. 48 south of Ballantrae.

But don't count on it. See you in 12 months, voters. Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Bunga-high could be built in any Stouffville neighbourhood

Re: *New home too big, neighbours say, Oct. 20.*
 I'm sure you've heard of a bungalow (single story, low profile house), but have you heard of the new style bungalow called bunga-high?

Bunga-high bungalows are still a single story, but their distinguishing feature is their use of the maximum height allowance by code, about 34 feet.

This may sound unbelievable, but Mayor Sue Sherban was quoted as saying: "Yes, that is a legal bungalow."

If you'd like to see an example of this new-style bungalow, created by Brundale Fine Homes Ltd., and approved by the town's planning department, please drop by the intersection of Rose and Lloyd avenues and see the new bunga-high being built at on a 40-foot lot.

Keep your eyes open. A bunga-high may be coming to your mature neighbourhood soon!

CHRIS LEDGARD
 STOUFFVILLE

Community backed student concert

The 13th annual Student Music Scholarship Concert Friday at Stouffville District Secondary School proved a marvellous success with 600 young people from six Whitchurch-Stouffville schools taking part.

The event raised \$5,600, all of which will be divided among participating schools to assist their music programs. Receipts over the past 13 years now total \$45,600.

The committee is truly appreciative of support provided this event by local businesses, service clubs and individuals, also the assistance of school

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

music directors; parents; high school office administrator Doris Jackson; high school custodial staff and others whose participation made for such an enjoyable evening.

Congratulations to Lillian Wild, recipient of the 2005 St. James Presbyterian Church \$100 scholarship. Please watch for next spring's announcement so you, the public, can submit nominations for the 2006 award.

JIM THOMAS, GAYLE ATKINSON,
 STEWART MCELROY
 CONCERT COMMITTEE, STOUFFVILLE

Big Pipe no joke, Mr. Fisch

Re: *Big Pipe one of best systems in Great Lakes area, Oct. 15.*

York Region CEO Bill Fisch must take us all for fools: His letter included the following: "The Big Pipe continues to enhance the environment and ensure our public health."

York Region has never done anything to enhance the environment. In fact it has done just the opposite. Urban sprawl, dry wells, gridlock and bad planning do not enhance the environment.

This must be Mr. Fisch's idea of a joke, but it isn't funny.

DAVID ROUT
 MARKHAM

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