

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Same pesticide law needed across York

As of this week, all Ontarians had to butt out — even if they were smoking in enclosed rooms at the doughnut shop or in a cigar store lounge.

This new addition to the smoking legislation is being hailed as an effective way of creating a safer, healthier environment for all of us, right across the province.

It's another story when it comes to pesticide legislation.

Now that it is hot and humid, a lot of us will be outside in the quest of creating the perfect, greenest and most beautiful lawns and gardens.

And many of us will still turn to pesticides. Despite research telling us pesticide use can be damaging to our environment and, in some cases, health, our communities have different rules.

If you live in Newmarket, you can't use pesticides.

Ditto for Toronto.

Markham, Aurora and Richmond Hill are thinking about banning pesticides, but you can still use them.

It's simply not fair to enforce different pesticide laws in different communities.

There is a definite need for co-operation among the municipalities, the regions and the province.

They need to come up with a more fitting solution that will not only benefit those in some parts of the province, but everyone from Alisa Craig to Zurich.

Maybe it means more research on the effects of pesticides.

As for smoking, the detrimental effects of second-hand smoke were established, despite concerns about the effects of pesticides, many of us haven't been convinced to give up using them in our gardens and on our lawns.

Until the facts are all there, some form of incentive is needed.

In Richmond Hill, for example, you have the Healthy Yards Program, which encourages you to turn in your old pesticides for organic lawn care products.

A while ago, there was talk of financial incentives to help people buy fuel-efficient vehicles, but that hasn't come to be.

A similar break on, say, PST might help convince some switching to organic products is a worthwhile move.

It's the first day of June and we've already had two smog advisory days — Newmarket was named as one of the worst air quality areas this week.

And, if we can do a little to help ease the strain on our environment by coming up with uniform pesticide laws, shouldn't we do that? Because, after all, it is our health we are discussing.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason
In search of our finest citizens

They're out there. We just need your help identifying them.

They're our best citizens, those who think of others before themselves.

They will be crowned Whitchurch-Stouffville's citizen and sports person of the year at the Strawberry Festival late this month.

If you come through for us, that is. Nominations opened last week for both awards. They close June 16.

The awards are a neat slice of life, here in the small town that is about to grow into a small city.

This is not quite Cheers territory, where everybody still knows everybody's name, but it's close.

Take last year's sports person of the year, Jean Barclay. Her skating and coaching career spanned the existence of three arenas. After the awards ceremony in Memorial Park, three generations of residents waited to congratulate her. She had taught them or their children the great Canadian skill of skating. That's community.

It was the same a couple of years ago for citizen of the year Sandy Schell Kennedy. Best known for her years of coordinating Stouffville's award-winning Terry Fox Run, Sandy, too, had an entourage of family members and appreciative friends offering congratulations. People here care.

The Sun-Tribune and our predecessors, The Stouffville Sun and The Tribune, have been honoured to sponsor the awards for more than 20 years. It's the small town version of being able to put your name on the Stanley Cup or Academy Awards.

What makes an award winner? It's not someone who makes a living on what they do. They aren't involved for personal gain or because they have a child or spouse involved.

Many of the sports winners are coaches or team executives who led squads without a son or daughter on the roster. Same with the tireless service club work, like late Lion Cliff Aiken, who gets involved simply because it's the right thing to do in their home town.

One of my neatest of annual jobs here in Sun-Tribune is to inform recipients that they've been selected.

The bizarre part? Trying to find free time in their schedules for them to be photographed and interviewed for the paper. They're that involved!

Nominations should be e-mailed to stouffvilleawards@yrng.com. Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Latham Gallery deserves more respect from councillors

As a member and volunteer of the Latham Gallery, I was outraged after attending the April 18 town council meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the gallery was asked to present two budgets for funding. The volunteer gallery board presented a "survival budget" with an operating grant request of \$30,000, which would mean completely depleting the gallery's coffers by the end of the year, and a "growth budget" grant amount of \$50,000, which would provide a minimum level of growth.

Councillor Rob Hargrave argued eloquently for the \$30,000 grant. His request was met by dead silence from the rest of the councillors. No one supported his motion. Not even Councillor Harry Bowes, who represents the very ward the gallery is in. Yet, these are the very councillors, who at election time, voiced their support of the gallery.

In the end, Susanne Hilton put a \$20,000 grant on the table, which passed. By their actions, it appears this is a council that does not want to see the gallery grow, not even to survive, just a long, slow, painful death. The gallery will be facing cuts to programs or its first deficit in 27 years.

Each year, the gallery must beg for funding from council through grants and awards, competing for funds with other deserving charity groups.

The gallery has asked to be designated a line item on the town budget, like the museum and library, all are important year-round institutions.

Council seems unwilling to do this until there is a cultural policy in effect. This policy, drafted by a dedicated group of volunteers, which has tirelessly scrutinized stacks of information and poli-

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cies from this and other communities, is under revision yet again. Talk of a cultural policy has been in the works since 2003.

The gallery can no longer wait. Council's inaction will be the death of it.

The town claims it has no money. Yet it found more than \$100,000 for cost overruns related to the renovations at the town offices and the renovations at Lemonville Community Centre.

The gallery doesn't go over budget. We cut corners, rely heavily on volunteers and constantly pursue donations, freebies and discounts to bring visual arts to the community.

It is time council gave the gallery the respect it deserves.

Time is of the essence for the Latham Gallery as provincial funding diminishes by \$30,000 this year and \$45,000 next year.

As the forecasters predict, culture is the future for towns and cities alike. It is the gallery's turn for support.

If the gallery dies, there won't be any need for an arts and culture policy because the only arts institution in Whitchurch-Stouffville will be gone.

MARGARET GRANDISON
STOUFFVILLE

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