

# OPINION

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## Editorial

### Health worth more than tax deduction

Remember back in January, when you made that New Years resolution to get in shape? You took out that bargain fitness club membership and worked out regularly for two months.

The last time you saw the place was sometime in May, but you have been paying monthly, workout or no workout. Wouldn't it be nice to get some of that back on your taxes?

The Fitness Industry Council of Canada is lobbying for just that.

The fitness club lobby group has started a campaign to make memberships tax deductible and is encouraging people to send post-cards to the federal government.

The argument is that promoting fitness will save the government more in health care costs and industry downtime that it would cost in taxes.

And federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has already embraced the general idea, offering a \$500 tax credit to help cover registration fees for children's sports in his spring budget. If it's good for children, why not grownups?

But we can extend that a little.

If the feds will give you a tax break for the gym membership you don't use, why not for that as-seen-on-TV home workout contraption that sits in your basement collecting dust. It's keeping you every bit as fit as your gym membership.

Should you be able to deduct your registration fees for slo-pitch or beer league hockey? Or does the post-game drinking cancel out the health benefit of playing the sport?

And what about the poor slob who gets up at 5 a.m. to run a few miles before work. He shouldn't lose out just because he isn't spending a lot of money to keep fit. Maybe he can write off his Nikes.

Or maybe there are some things people should do, even if there's no tax incentive.

The benefits of an active lifestyle are well documented: you feel better, you have less stress, you are more alert and you are less susceptible to various illnesses. All those things are more important than a tax saving.

The tax break is a Tory's favourite language. If something is good, it deserves a tax break.

But it isn't necessary to attach a tax advantage to every virtue.

In this case, an industry wants public policy to assist in its marketing. Canada has many more important financial priorities.



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Get ready to drive in a roundabout way, Stouffville motorists

We ventured into uncharted territory last week and uncovered an amazing discovery.

A roundabout in the suburban wilds of Stouffville? Blimey, mates.

There it was on the western extension of Millard Street, where it meets West Lawn Crescent.

At first blush, it could be any other Stouffvillian intersection. Two streets meet. But there are no stop signs, just a series of yields. And, there's a circular structure in the middle of it all that no soccer mom or dad in the fiercest of SUVs should tackle.

This will be nothing new to those of you who have driven in Great Britain or watched the *Carry On* movies. You've seen vehicles do this circular dance, enter the roundabout and then exit at the appropriate time. A game of musical chairs using cars, sort of.

They've been big in Britain, particularly in the past 40 years and they're getting larger in North America.

They accomplish a lot of things, according to the engineering community. For starters, they save gas and help the environment. No one's idling his gas guzzler, waiting for a traffic light or the intersection to clear.

They also calm traffic, a buzz term if there ever was one in modern suburbia. Lead foots can't hightail it through when there are cars to watch for and a concrete structure to avoid.

As a result, they actually reduce collisions. Who knew? Unless I missed it, there were no public meetings to discuss bringing roundabouts to Stouffville. Somewhere in between the multitude of sessions on the fate of the old town hall, there had to be some time available, council?

And how about sessions on mastering the roundabout, for those of us who are relative virgins at this game?

Here's hoping it works. Millard and Hoover Park Drive to the south are supposed to be traffic-moving alternatives to Main Street.

My scouts tell me there's at least one more roundabout, in the subdivision across the Tenth Line from the Stouffville Country market. (A spokesperson for the town was not available to talk roundabouts, even in a roundabout way.)

The secret to roundabout success? Remember to keep to the right and keep moving. You don't want to recreate that Simpsons episode where Homer and the gang get stuck in a British roundabout then smash into the Queens carriage.

Carry on, Stouffville.  
 Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

## Letters to the Editor

### It's time to take back roads from drunk drivers

On behalf of the MADD York Region Chapter, I would like to thank all those who supported us by participating in the MADD Dash walkathon. Sponsored by the Aurora's Fitness Clubs of Canada, the walk was organized to raise awareness and funds to help in our mission to stop impaired driving and to support the victims of this violent crime.

Many thanks to both Kevin Nagle and Kerrie Kramer for organizing the event.

I would also like to thank our supporters for donating various products and services: Xllarate Sports Power Fluid; VW Richmond Hill; Connect us Corporation; The Landscape Company INC; The Era-Banner; The Liberal; Zan Chantik; The Murphy Hockey School; Bell Mobility; FR8 Design; Tidal Wave Promotions and Kellogs.

A special thank you to the dignitaries who attended. Present were Oak Ridges-Markham MP Lui Temelkovski, York North MPP Julia Munro, Nathan McMillan on behalf of York-Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan, Janesse McPhillips on behalf of Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees, Chief Armand LaBarge and Aurora Mayor Tim Jones.

Thanks also to Lois Brown, a long-time MADD supporter, for attending and sharing the story of her own mother, who was killed by a drunk driver.

Keynote speaker Marilyn Bobel was riveting, as she shared the life and death of her only son.

We heard about the heart-wrenching circumstances surrounding Steven's death. She shared how a drunk driver, more than double the legal BAC level, sped along Gorham Street at 122 km/h. Upon running a red light, the offender crashed into her son's car. Steven's aorta separated from his heart and he vio-

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All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address.

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lently bled to death', she said.

Steven's memory was insulted when the third-time offender who killed him served only 10 months for his crime. Upon entering the courtroom, the offender gave Mrs. Bobel the middle finger. "The third-time offender who killed my only son has since re-offended," she stated.

"As a parent, it is impossible to comprehend having to bury your own child. Losing a spouse is like losing a piece of your heart, but when you lose a child, you lose a piece of your soul."

Many sincere thanks go to Marilyn for her ongoing passion in the fight against this deadly crime.

Every day on average, four people are killed in alcohol-related collisions. Still another 190 people are injured every single day.

It is a labour of love both to our communities and the memories of our loved ones. So many need not face that massive void as loved ones are prematurely wrenched from their lives at the hands of selfish, irresponsible criminals.

Impaired driving is no accident, it is a deadly choice. Impaired driving is 100-per-cent preventable.

MARGARET WILLIAMS  
 PRESIDENT, MADD YORK REGION

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