

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Weekly pickup could be answer

Re: Recycling no longer in the bag, Stouffville, March 10.

I find it upsetting to read about rejected plastic bags full of recyclables being left at curbs by the recycling pickup employees. We are all trying to do our bit to save the environment. I understand the need to make the changes, however, would it have been difficult to dump the recyclables into the truck and leave a note about the change?

I have two blue boxes and I have used plastic bags for the rest.

With the amount of recycling everyone does, perhaps the town should consider pickup on a weekly basis.

KATHLEEN ARMSTRONG
STOUFFVILLE

Community spirit alive

The members of the Silver Jubilee Club would like to thank the Stouffville Lions Club for the generous donation of a spring flower arrangement.

Thanks to the Stouffville Business Improvement Area for arranging a visit to the club by its leprechaun, complete with Irish hats and buttons, to our annual bazaar on St. Patrick's Day.

This is just a further indication our community spirit is alive and well.

WILF MORLEY
STOUFFVILLE

Coverage well rounded

Re: Team of reporters, editors take home prestigious hardware, Jan. 25.

On behalf of York Region residents, York Regional council and staff, I wish to congratulate York Region Media Group's team of reporters and editors on winning five awards in the Suburban Newspapers of America 2006 editorial excellence competition for community and daily newspapers across North America.

These five awards show residents are well served by the news and information provided by YRMG, including consistent and quality coverage of York Region issues and initiatives.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the award-winning writers who took first place for the in-depth growth series, Growing Home: Caroline Grech, Simone Joseph, Patrick Mangion, Michael Power, Chris Traber, Joan Ransberry, Teresa Latchford and Serena Willoughby.

The impact of the province's Places to Grow legislation on our communities is real.

I would also like to commend Chris Traber for his series, Below the Line, about poverty in our neighbourhoods.

Congratulations to Debora Kelly for winning an award for her column.

Your coverage is well rounded — aspects your readers appreciate and count on.

BILL FISCH
YORK REGION CHAIRPERSON AND CEO



We're hungry for sustainable options

Phew. That is all I can say now that I have finished a 30-day cross-Canada road trip to listen to Canadians' concerns about the environment.

It has been exhausting and, at times, bewildering, but I now know the concern for environmental issues were reading about in the polls isn't just a surface anomaly, it's real and it's palpable. Canadians are hungry for sustainable solutions and frustrated by what they see as a lack of political leadership on these issues. It frustrates me as well.

Governments should make it easy for consumers to choose environmentally sustainable products and services. World-renowned economists such as Sir Nicholas Stern are telling us greatly reducing our energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions is critical to having a healthy economy in the not-too-distant future.

Air and water pollution is already costing our economy billions of dollars every year due to increased

health care costs and lost work days. It's only sensible — sustainability should be a top priority of every government at every level.

Yet, as I wrote in a recent column about the designed obsolescence of cellphones and other gadgets, disposability seems to be winning over sustainability on many fronts. That battle with cellphone chargers wasn't the only time on the tour we weren't able to make our first choice from a sustainability perspective. Another was with our fuel.

We specifically chose to lease a bus with a modern, super-efficient diesel engine. Many people may not be aware, but diesel has a lower carbon footprint than gasoline.

This is why there are so many diesel cars in fuel-conscious Europe. We needed a big vehicle such as a bus because it would be packed with an entire month's worth of office supplies, gear, clothes and food for up to a dozen people. A bus was by far our best option to have the lowest carbon-footprint possible.

But we knew the tour would still

have a footprint and it was very important to us that the tour be carbon-neutral. So, we decided to calculate the global-warming emissions from the tour and purchase internationally regulated credits to offset those emissions.

These credits are similar to a self-imposed carbon tax. Money spent on these "gold-standard" credits goes toward reducing an equal amount of emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Replacing an old dirty coal-fired power plant with a wind farm, for

example. Since climate change is a global problem, it doesn't matter where we reduce emissions, so long as we actually reduce them.

For us, the icing on the cake would have been to also showcase an alternative fuel — in this case, biodiesel. This is a fuel made from vegetable matter, such as vegetable oil or even used restaurant grease, as opposed to fossil fuels. It's non-toxic and, when burned, produces less carbon dioxide and fewer of the most common air pollutants.

Biodiesel is now available as a blended fuel in some major Canadian centres. It's much more readily available in Europe.

Biodiesel is not without controversy. A large-scale conversion of forested land to grow crops for biodiesel could result in a huge net release of carbon into the atmosphere. And there are widespread concerns about using land to grow fuel that could be growing food.

Still, biodiesel has many advantages and could be an important part of a sustainable future. It certainly

warrants more attention — which is why we wanted to use it.

In the end, however, the decision was made for us when the bus's engine manufacturer warned our leasing company running biodiesel in the new engine would void the warranty. Our bus company was supportive, but said they couldn't take the risk.

From small things, such as disposable electronic goods, to bigger items such as the fuels we use to get around or heat and cool our homes, making the most sustainable choices can still be much harder than it should be.

Consumers can't very well embrace the best choices if they don't know what they are or if they aren't even available. To break down those barriers and help guide our economy to a sustainable future, we need government leadership and that's what my tour was all about.

Take the Suzuki challenge at www.david-suzuki.org



David Suzuki

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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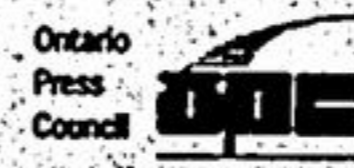
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