

# OPINION

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Spring lawn cleanup would improve town

Many hours a week I joyfully spend jogging or pushing a stroller around town. I love Stouffville!

I also love this time of year when warmer weather arrives and signs of life are everywhere.

I am always disgusted, however, by the amount of garbage on lawns and streets after the snow melts.

What a difference it would make if every homeowner would take five minutes and walk around his property and the curb, picking up garbage or recycling.

If you have an elderly neighbour, then take an extra few minutes to do his lawn, as well. As a community service project, families, youth groups, guide or scout troops could clean up their local schools or parks, main street or reservoir.

A little effort from many people would result in a more beautiful town.

MARY LUCAS  
STOUFFVILLE

### Mental health commission long overdue

The Conservative government should be commended for committing to the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission.

The commission was recommended by Senator Michael Kirby in his comprehensive report relating to mental health, mental illness and addiction in Canada, titled *Out of the Shadows at Last*, which was released on May 16, 2006.

The announcement of action on the report is long overdue.

The establishment of the commission will help remove the stigma surrounding mental health and provide a strong national voice for those struggling with mental health issues.

According to Children's Mental Health Ontario, two youth take their own lives each week and one in five children or youth struggle with a mental health issue.

The time to act and eliminate these horrifying statistics is now.

While it is encouraging to see the federal government take ownership of mental health in Canada, the heavy lifting has just begun.

On the heels of the federal budget, which announced increased transfer payments of \$39.4 billion over seven years to the provinces for social programs, Ontario must step up and deliver the funding to ensure each child and youth in Ontario has the opportunity to live a socially and emotionally healthy life.

MARK WALSH  
PRESIDENT, KINARK CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES



# Think green when you think of your legacy

I just turned 71. That's old, at least in my books.

Sometimes, I can't believe I've made it this far. Other times, I can't believe how much there is left I want to do.

At my age, I think it is pretty common for people to start thinking about these things and what we want to leave behind, our legacies.

Politicians have a much shorter lifespan, politically speaking, that is. They can be around for four years or less. Rarely more than eight. That's why I'm often surprised by how little they seem to want to accomplish in that time.

Certainly, I understand the lure of the status quo. Change is hard. Often, vested interests will fight you every step of the way. Political advisers will say, "No, no, no, stay the course. Don't make waves. Get re-elected."

But what is the point of being re-elected if you aren't going to do anything?

Yes, yes, maybe I'm being naive.

Maybe politicians are just there to support their vested interests, take home a fat paycheque and pension and revel in the power of their office.

But surely there has got to be more to it than that? The life of a politician is not one I envy. It is hard, sometimes brutal. You are constantly under scrutiny. You are always on the job. It takes up your entire life.

That is why I honestly believe most politicians at least start out wanting to work for the common good.

Many become overwhelmed by the muck, but great leaders act. They make bold decisions and move on them.

They don't tinker when big changes are needed and they don't change things just for the sake of change.

One of my pet peeves is the way some administrations will move into office and, rather than take an honest assessment of what is working and what isn't, instead set

out to dismantle everything the previous administration had done just to make a point.

Of course, it's hard for leaders to act without public support. But right now, the environment is the top public concern.

The public will support strong environmental leadership, so now is the time for our political leaders to act.

And politicians are indeed starting to take note. Seeing the success of initiatives in Europe, some politicians in North America are

making bold decisions and plans to clean up our environment.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger may have been the brunt of jokes when he was first elected, but no one is laughing now as he has carefully crafted one of the world's most progressive, legislated plans to reduce pollution and global warming.

Recently, British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell went to California to talk to Mr. Schwarzenegger about his plans.

That is a very encouraging sign. Mr. Campbell's speech from the Throne earlier this year was very bold and painted a new vision of British Columbia as leading North America in terms of sustainability.

Given how proud British Columbians are of their natural heritage, progressive environmental leadership seems like a natural fit.

It will also help diversify and strengthen B.C.'s economy in the long term and also be a model for other provinces.

This is exactly what our leaders should be doing, learning from each other.

Many provinces and states are coming out with exciting new programs toward sustainability. Ontario recently announced a "standard offer contract" system for renewable energy that is the first of its kind in North America.

I hope Mr. Campbell and all our leaders take a good look at the best examples of environmental leadership from all jurisdictions and incorporate them into their own plans.

In the end, all we have are our legacies. I have been on this planet now for 71 years.

I don't know how many years I have left, but I promise you I plan to make the most of them.

I hope our political leaders look at their terms in office the same way.

Take the Suzuki challenge at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)



David Suzuki

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