

# OPINION

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Better to teach belief system

*Re: Funds provided to Catholic schools should be used for real needs, letter to the editor by Matt Douris, April 12.*

First of all, one would have to agree more funds are needed for educating our children. Where they can be found is as good a question as any.

Secondly, it is everyone's choice to direct your education funds to public or Catholic school boards.

So, if you see this as redundant or unjustifiable, change your tax forms.

And lastly, as an educator of young children and a parent of four, I believe, in this day and age, our youth need more guidance than ever before.

If that guidance comes from an "imaginary being", (and I can't imagine you were referring to our Lord as that), then let them believe in super heroes to help them sleep better.

Let them believe in saints to help them be better beings and let them believe in fairies and dragons to help them have an amazing childhood.

As for the Catholic issue, some of the most inspiring and world-changing people practise the religion and to put down its virtue and meaning to those of us who believe in it is both insulting and unnecessary.

We all have a right to believe in what we want to believe and maybe the school system should focus on teaching all beliefs so

our children can have well-rounded and tolerable beliefs about everyone.

But isn't it better we teach them something to believe in rather than nothing to believe in? I would expect that whatever Mr. Douris believes in, he would want all of us to "tolerate" it.

SUE LUFF  
STOUFFVILLE

### People are strongest asset

With National Volunteer Week beginning tomorrow, the Canadian Cancer Society would like to thank each and every one of its 750 dedicated volunteers in the Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Thanks to the support of our volunteers, we are able to fund life-saving cancer research and vital support services that help people living with cancer in Markham, Unionville, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Milliken Mills.

Our volunteers have integrity, they are caring, they have courage and they are progressive. These values are at the core of everything they do.

We invite those interested in volunteering to call 905-294-5925 to find out how you can make a real difference in the fight against cancer.

Together, let's make cancer history.

BRUCE BURGESS  
AND NANCY BROUILLARD  
CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY



# Scientific community has lost great interpreter

**O**n March 30, Science, one of the world's most respected scientific journals, published a paper about how the overfishing of big sharks in our oceans has led to an increase in ray and skate populations which, in turn, is having cascading effects down the ocean food chain.

It's a fascinating piece of work — one of those big-picture studies that helps connect the dots and shed light on the complex interconnections between various species in an ecosystem.

But what makes this particular piece of science so important to me is the lead author, Ransom Myers of Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Dr. R.A. Myers, RAM to his friends, died earlier that same week.

The Science paper is typical of RAM's work. He was a brilliant scientist who became a tireless advocate for conservation after finding disturbing trends in our oceans.

Those trends led him to raise alarm bells over mismanagement of the Atlantic cod when he was with the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

For his efforts, he was first ignored and then reprimanded. The fact he was later proven right, I'm sure, offered him little consolation as he watched the fisheries collapse.

More than 15 years later, it has yet to recover.

In 2003, RAM published a paper in the journal Nature that earned him worldwide recognition. The report was a culmination of years of work with his colleague, Dr. Boris Worm.

Together, they had carefully dissected decades worth of fishing data and found that major large predatory fish — the ones we most like to eat such as tuna, cod and swordfish — had seen their populations plummet by some 90 per cent in just 50 years.

The paper was controversial, especially in the fishing industry,



David Suzuki

because it warned many more fisheries would face collapse if we don't seriously cut back on what we are taking out of the oceans.

But RAM was never one to back down from controversy. In fact, controversy probably helped the story earn media attention around the world, shedding light on a problem that for many is out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

It was this sort of big picture thinking that helped make RAM such a giant in his field.

In 2005, Fortune magazine

named him one of the world's Top 10 people to watch. He was indeed a distinguished scientist, an engaging public speaker and leading advocate for change.

Sadly, we will now never know what else he may have accomplished. His death from a brain tumour, at just 54, came at the height of his scientific career and at a time when the world needs him most.

In February, I was fortunate enough to be able to visit RAM in the hospital. By then, he could only say yes or no, but he understood everything that was going on and what was being said.

I hope I was able to adequately convey just how much he had accomplished and how much he had done for science and for conserving nature for future generations.

RAM's Science paper on the demise of sharks seems to be getting good publicity, as it should. Rather than merely being mindless man eaters, sharks are an inte-

gral part of the ocean's web of life.

As the report shows, killing them off for shark fin soup has allowed other species, such as rays to thrive.

But booming ray populations are now decimating their favourite food source — scallops. And since scallops help filter water, their loss has actually resulted in poorer water quality in some areas.

Dr. Myers was at the leading edge of conservation biology. He consistently strove to dig deeper and go further in the search for answers to pressing ecological issues.

His efforts raised understanding of the plight of our oceans and he inspired a generation of marine biologists.

His work will be sorely missed and so will he.

*David T. Suzuki, chairperson of the David Suzuki Foundation, is an award-winning scientist, environmentalist and broadcaster. Visit [david Suzuki.org](http://david Suzuki.org)*

### 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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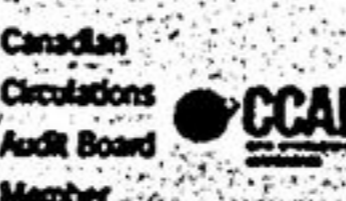
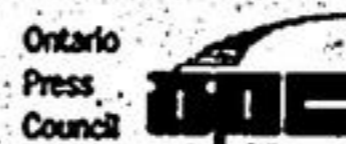
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