

# OPINION

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### You can help local farmers every time you shop

*Re: Drought, imports scaring farmers, July 5.*

According to this article and one in the Toronto Star July 1, imported produce is driving our farmers to extinction.

The only times local produce sells are when there is a pestilence somewhere else.

Consider Strawberry Festival time. There used to be a time when California shipped in strawberries only outside of our own growing season.

Such has not been the case for several years. Many large chain supermarkets prefer a continuous year-round supply from big producers elsewhere to a brief supply from local farmers constrained by the short Canadian growing season.

That is why, in some supermarkets, you see only foreign-grown berries, even in the peak of our own berry season.

That is why so many farmers sell their farms. In the Georgetown area, where 30 years ago there were many strawberry growers, now there is only one remaining.

One of the farms, which is now closed, had hundreds of quarts of strawberries left rotting in the fields last year because a chain supermarket stopped accepting them.

It has long been known produce yields its best nutrients when it ripens in the fields. If it is harvested and shipped before that, it

loses a lot of these nutrients, even when it is allowed to ripen before being eaten.

Therefore, it is much healthier to eat produce picked when fully ripe, just hours before being purchased.

We want our farmers to keep their farms for their sake and for our own health. This is possible only if local produce is being bought by us, the consumers.

So if we want our local farms to stay open and continue to yield for us their nutrient-rich produce year after year, we should keep our eyes open for local produce every time we shop. If we do not see local produce, we should ask for it and encourage others to do the same.

DIANA POON

MISSION TEAM

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### Nice to see Good Samaritans

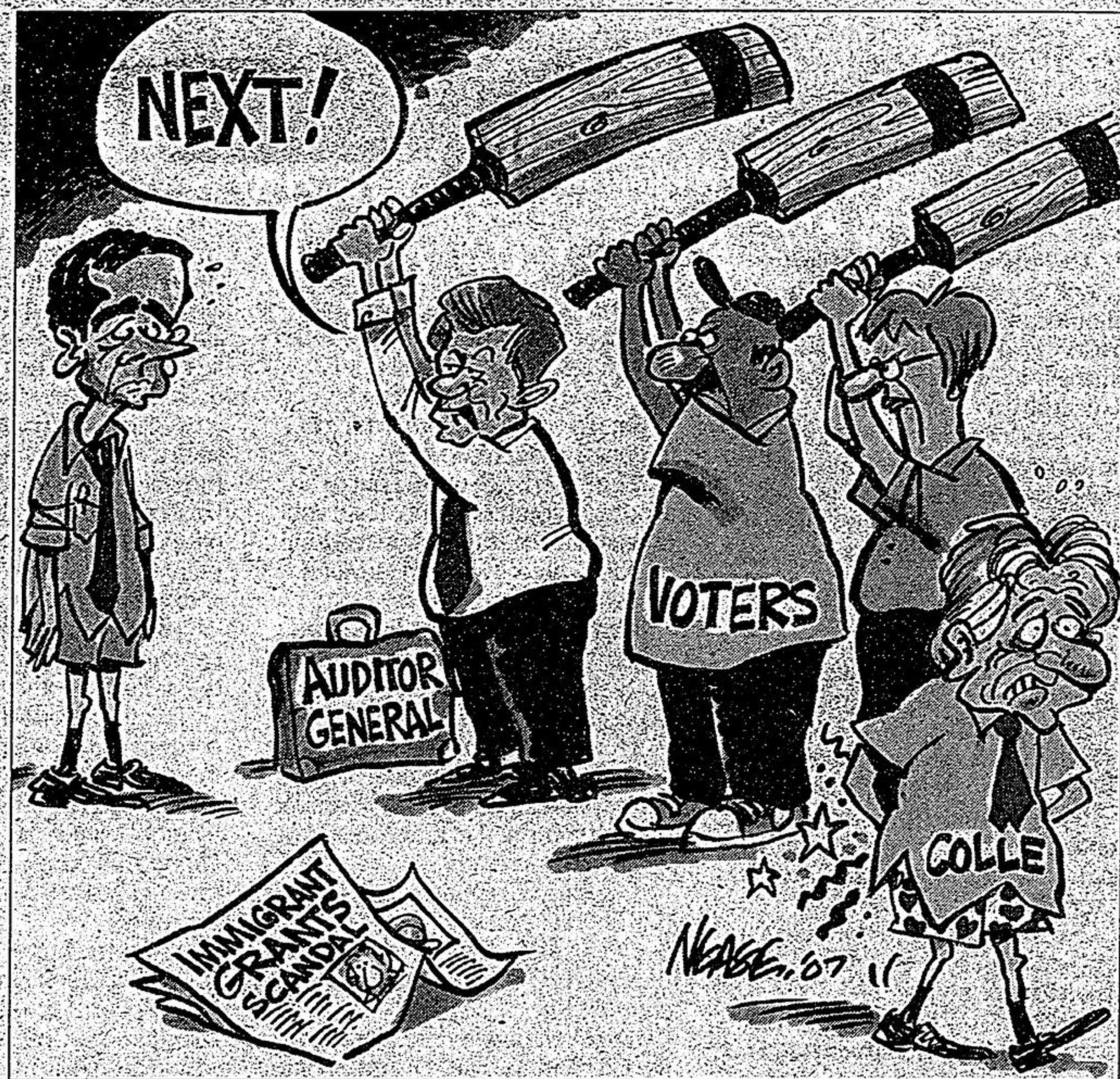
It is nice to see good-hearted people are still out there in the community.

Recently, I took a walk to do some errands and upon my exit from a store, it was pouring rain. A lady and her daughter offered me a ride back to work and saved me from having another shower for the day.

To both of them and all other Good Samaritans, I thank you for putting a sense of community back in the town.

MEAGAN LEWIS

AURORA



# Summer good time to reconnect with food

Every summer, if I'm lucky, I get to spend some time with my family at our cabin on an island off the West Coast.

It's a place we go to recharge our batteries and reconnect with each other and the natural world.

Part of that reconnection is with food.

Although many of us quickly scarf down whatever's convenient as we rush about our daily lives, eating is one of the most intimate experiences we can have. The food we eat is broken down by our bodies at a molecular level and absorbed into our cells.

It becomes part of us. We quite literally are what we eat.

That's why it disturbs me to see the kind of food many people consume on a daily basis. I admit, I'm guilty of less-healthy choices myself sometimes.

I try to be vigilant about food, but I travel a fair bit and it can be hard to find the time to slow down and eat right.

People think that being on a TV show is glamorous, but after a long

day of filming, my dinner might well consist of a veggie dog from the street vendor outside my hotel before turning in for the night.

When I get to the family cabin, food stops being a mere necessity to provide energy for another hour of shooting. It becomes something to celebrate. Summertime provides us with a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables and our oceans can still serve up a veritable feast of shellfish and other seafood.

As the Coastal First Nations saying goes: "When the tide is out, the table is set."

Most Canadians — in fact, the vast majority of us — now live in urban centres, where we are often completely removed from the sources of our food.

Much of what we buy is pre-packaged, frozen, chopped and formed or otherwise processed before we even pick it up from the nearest warehouse club store.

Yet there's something truly special about digging up your own clams and mussels for dinner.

Or catching a fish for breakfast.



David Suzuki

Or picking your own fruits and vegetables.

Not only is the food fresh, the experience makes it taste better and feel more satisfying.

For the past 27 years, part of my family's summer ritual has been to go cherry picking because I wanted my children to celebrate food's seasonality.

We stuff ourselves silly with juicy red fruits and bring back pallets of cherries to share with friends.

It's actually pretty hard work. But that's part of the fun and the satis-

faction. You can't buy that experience from a big-box store.

In fact, it drives me nuts to go into a supermarket in the summer and see it loaded with imported fruits and vegetables when local gardens and farms are overflowing with food.

Farmers markets are where I prefer to get my produce in the summer, when local farmers and some industrious city gardeners make their harvests available directly to the rest of us.

There are plenty of reasons to support farmers markets and local food, besides the experience.

Eating locally grown food helps reduce the pollution caused through transportation.

Apples from New Zealand, for example, are a pet peeve of mine.

Many local farms often also have organic certification, which is less intensive and more sustainable in the long term — and organic produce is grown without using chemical pesticides.

Some proponents of organic food also say it's better for you,

although the research is inconclusive.

One recently completed 10-year study to be published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry found that levels of certain cancer-fighting antioxidant chemicals were almost twice as high in organic tomatoes as they were in conventionally grown tomatoes.

Researchers surmise the availability of nitrogen in the soil is the reason for the difference. But other studies on wheat and carrots have found little nutritional differences between conventional and organic crops.

Regardless of your reasons for eating locally, summer is a great time to slow down and reconnect with food.

Few things are as fundamental to our personal health and well-being. And few things have a bigger impact on the health of the planet either.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.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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